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VARSITY

Despite public outcry, research fellow told to leave UK hears nothing from Home Office

Rosie Bradbury
Deputy Editor

"There were several points when I just got to feeling like I can't do this, maybe I should just completely forget about it, just even yesterday I kind of had this thought of, 'maybe I should just move back to India and just forget about the whole thing because it is really exhausting'", Dr Asiya Islam remarks, her voice level, but strained.

On 5th November, Islam, a Junior Research Fellow at Newnham, received a letter saying that she had been refused Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK by the Home Office. She then had just nine days to submit an appeal of the decision that was threatening her ability to continue to live in the country where she has spent the last ten years of her life.

"The letter really [felt] like it's a copy and paste job with some of my specific details entered in there", Islam says — she could tell that her nationality had been inserted in, the word 'India' a slightly different font and size from the surrounding text. Islam's application for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), which she had submitted five weeks earlier, was the most recent of several visas

she has applied for since moving to the UK to pursue her masters' degree at the London School of Economics.

She's now a Junior Research Fellow in Sociology, having completed her PhD as a Cambridge Gates Scholar earlier this year. Each time, she said, the application has been more difficult than the last, more "impersonal, and dehumanising".

"It just feels like the Home Office is just building more and more walls to block out people as best as it can," she says, sitting in a warmly-lit office in Newnham on Wednesday evening.

"These decisions are decisions about peoples' work, they're decisions about peoples' lives, so you can't really just do them in the set standard, copy and paste way".

Since she posted on Twitter on 6th November that her application had been rejected, Islam has received an outpouring of support, and is still catching up with messages from people who've had similar experiences with the UK's hostile environment immigration practices.

"I've gotten so many emails that just said, 'in solidarity with you, let me know if I can help you', so that's been really

Full story page 2-3 ▶



▲ Dr Asiya Islam, a Junior Research Fellow at Newnham College (ANDREW HYNES)

Less than half of EU nationals in Cambridge offered permanent residency

Marie Langrishe
News Correspondent

Less than half of EU nationals living in Cambridge have been offered permanent residency in the UK according to statistics published by the Home Office last week.

Of the 10,380 EU nationals who applied for permanent residency, only 4,720 have been offered settled status. 4,140 have been granted pre-settled status, which only gives the temporary right to stay in the UK. Another 1,470 EU nationals living in Cambridge are still waiting for a final decision to be made.

The largest numbers of applications were made by Italian, Spanish and Polish nationals, which reflects UK trends, and 790 of the applicants for settled status were for individuals under 18. Romanian applicants, who are the second largest applicant group nationally, were the seventh most common in Cambridge.

The percentage of concluded applications that resulted in settled status in Cambridge is lower than national averages. This may reflect the city's high volume of university students, many of whom will not have lived in the UK for the length of time required to qualify for settled status.

Nationally, of the 1.5 million concluded applications, 61% were granted

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EDITORIAL

We can't detach Cambridge from the 'outside world'

At this point in term, we often talk about becoming lost in the 'Cambridge bubble', overwhelmed by the stresses of our academic and social lives here in the University and feeling utterly detached from the news and concerns of the 'outside world'. This might seem like an innocuous and harmless Cambridge-ism, perhaps just another marker of belonging to this prestigious, though at times imposing, institution. But this experience of Cambridge is not universal - far from it.

This week, we lead with two stories focused on the increasing challenges of UK immigration, against the backdrop of Brexit and the Hostile Environment. Dr Asiya Islam, a Junior Research Fellow at Newnham College, was last week denied Indefinite Leave to Remain by the Home Office. Her case sparked international outcry and attracted mass media attention. An open letter calling on the Home Office to reconsider its decision has, as of Thursday, attracted almost 2,000 signatures from UK-based academics alone (front page).

For Dr Asiya Islam, and for others who face similar challenges in protecting their very right to live in this country, it's impossible to detach Cambridge from the nation at large, and from its current political challenges. If we think of Cambridge in such narrow terms, as a place untouched by the 'outside world', we will never be able to adequately support or members of our University, and those that live in this city.

With a General Election on the horizon, considering the impact of these challenges upon Cambridge, and Cambridge's impact upon the national picture, is increasingly important. We would do well to remain critical, and to listen to those who cannot maintain such a blinkered view of Cambridge.

Maia Wyn Davies & Stephanie Stacey

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Interviews

Dr Asiya Islam

"It's exhausting, completely"

Islam has lived in the UK for over 10 years. Last week, she received a letter from the Home Office: her visa application had been rejected. Her immigration status now remains in limbo.

► Continued from front page

encouraging," she adds. An open letter, so far signed by 1,725 UK academic staff, writes that Islam's individual case signals that "UK universities will continue to lose the talented PhD researchers that they have invested years in training."

The process of applying for ILR, and now, the legal appeal that she will undergo to reverse the decision before her student visa expires in January, has severely disrupted her life. The process of applying for the visa cost Islam over £3,400, and she wasn't able to leave the UK while it was pending, to attend a pre-paid conference she had planned to speak at in November, nor will she now be able to leave to conduct fieldwork while she appeals. "I was planning to go see my parents in India in December which I won't be doing now, so I'll just be here," she adds.

Islam's position as a junior research fellow is highly prestigious for an early career academic, but it is still a fixed-term contract, and will end after three years. "Particularly for us who are international students or international researchers ... we have to constantly deal with the immigration processes, and it really takes away from your time and energy and finances". The lack of financial support for non-EU staff at UK universities has come under greater scrutiny in recent

“It feels like the Home Office is just building more walls to block out people as best as it can”

years. A new campaign launched in April 2018, International and Broke, has called on UK universities to pay immigration costs for academics and their families, to provide legal advice, and end discriminatory monitoring of migrant staff and students.

According to a 2019 report by professional services firm EY, just 20% of Russell Group universities cover the full cost of Indefinite Leave to Remain for its non-EU staff, while 65% cover none of the costs. "For someone who has recently finished their PhD who has recently gone on to their first job, that's a huge amount of money, and I do genuinely think that universities in the UK need to be thinking much more about supporting their non-EU staff", Islam says. Though she emphasised that Cambridge's head of immigration has supported her throughout the process with legal advice and that her college has been supportive of her case, the personal expense of covering immigration and legal fees has been steep. "I'm still in the process of figuring out how to cover them because it's all expensive," Islam says.

Rising immigration fees and the unpredictable bureaucracy of the hostile environment risks deterring international students and staff from contributing their scholarship to the UK academy, if the process staying in the country are untenable, especially for those without



◀▲ Dr Asiya Islam's Tier 4 student visa will expire in January

(ANDREW HYNES)

Interviews



sponsors” of international staff, to eliminate minimum salary thresholds and implement a less heavy-handed approach.

But there was another aspect of how the Home Office has handled her case that’s particularly upsetting, Islam tells me: “[I have] the means to go get a lawyer and get all of this started in this very short time period, [but] most people are not in this position.” The Home Office’s bureaucracy is built to deter people from challenging their decision, she adds, citing the 14-day window from the date of the letter refusing her application before she loses her right to appeal: “How many people are able to make a decision of that kind?”

“That’s something that’s been really weighing on me because all of this has happened, it’s so nice to see so much support but I think there’s partly the narrative that, if you’re highly skilled you deserve to stay here, and perhaps if you’re not highly skilled you don’t, and that’s a problematic narrative in itself so that’s something that I’ve been grappling with and thinking about”, Islam remarks. “In some peoples’ minds, that kind of thing just never happens — bad immigration things only happen to ‘bad’ immigrants but that’s really not true”.

“I think the Home Office has gotten quite short-sighted”, she adds, not only in how “dehumanising” the process is — Islam had no conversations with a case worker during her ILR application, and couldn’t think of a single number that she could call at the Home Office about her case — but also in the impact that the policies of its hostile environment will have on immigrants who have spent years or decades in the country.

“There’s a lot of personal, emotional, professional, financial issues that have come up with this just even in the last week that I think I haven’t even had the time to fully process. So it is exhausting, completely”.

a financial safety net.

“It puts people in a position where they’re having to bear the costs of their own employment, and it’s almost a kind of way of saying, if you’re the kind of person who has £2,500, £3,500 spare to apply to your own visa we will hire you, otherwise we won’t hire you”, Islam remarks.

The potential long-term impact of the hostile environment policies on UK academia are wide-reaching: both in the ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity of university staff, but also in the risks associated with conducting fieldwork overseas while on a tier 4 student visa. Though the Home Office’s recently updated policy on tier 2 visas has acknowledged the principle that academics often have to do research outside of the UK, Islam’s eleven-month long fieldwork in New Delhi was the basis upon which the Home Office denied her ILR application.

Despite the fact that Islam sent letters from the University and the Department of Sociology that proved this fieldwork was a necessary part of her research, the Home Office said that she “failed to provide any exceptional reasons in support of [her] out of time application”, citing its policy that Tier 4 visa holders must not be absent from the country for over 540 days over a 10-year time period. Her fieldwork, studying female labour force participation in India, was built into her PhD “right from the moment of its inception”, and had required first building trust with women whom she would later interview about their families, their work, and their lives. So to Islam, the Home Office’s

“It’s basically like saying there is no value in doing long-term, qualitative research, which I find very disappointing”

decision was “basically like saying, there is no value in doing long term qualitative, good quality research, which I find very disappointing”.

A Gates Scholar and a early-career academic at Newnham, Islam has institutional backing and access to legal advice and resources, and her case has already attracted media coverage in *The Guardian*, *BBC*, and *The New York Times*. But Islam hasn’t heard anything more from the Home Office since then. The UK Home Office declined to comment on Islam’s case to *Varsity*.

Last month, the Home Office reversed two decisions to refuse visa applications made by academics at the University of Oxford for their families, likely as a result of public pressure and multiple stories by *The Guardian*, as well as lobbying by Oxford. In contrast, a researcher told by the Home Office that she would be deported to the Democratic Republic of Congo was not offered any legal or other support by her employer, Leicester University.

Academics have described the hurdles imposed by the Home Office as systemic, and the outcomes of many of the cases are dependent on unpredictable factors, such as the support that a researcher’s employer is willing to provide, and the media or political attention that arise from their particular stories going public.

Professor Sarah Franklin, head of Cambridge’s Sociology department, told *The New York Times* that the hostile environment extending to universities was “undermining core institutions”. The Academy of Social Sciences has also called on the government to make universities “trusted

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City Council relaunches winter weather provisions for rough

Grace Lozinski
News Correspondent

This winter, 46 beds will be on offer to rough sleepers in Cambridge as part of the City Council's Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP).

Under the scheme, which is funded by the Council and managed by Jimmy's Cambridge and Cambridge Churches Homeless Project (CCHP), rough sleepers are offered emergency accommodation in severe weather conditions between 1st November 2019 and 31st March 2020.

Currently, there are no legal protections for individuals sleeping rough in England during severe weather conditions. Nevertheless, English homelessness charity Homeless Link advises local authorities of their "humanitarian obligation to prevent death on the streets in harsh weather."

29 beds managed by homelessness charity Jimmy's Cambridge are currently available to rough sleepers under the SWEP provision, where meals and additional support are also provided to service users. These will only be made available in severe weather conditions, while an additional 17 beds managed by CCHP will be permanently available in church and synagogue halls from 3rd December to the end of March.

There is no set charge for accessing the SWEP provisions, but individuals who are eligible to claim housing benefit are expected to do so as a condition of their stay, and "100% of the claim for that night will be taken as 'payment' for the individual's stay," said a representative for Cambridge City Council.

"However," they explained, "SWEP is offered regardless of an individual's ability (or willingness) to make a housing benefit claim."

The emergency provisions are triggered when the Met Office forecasts a temperature low of zero degrees celsius or under for three successive days, and in periods of prolonged heavy rain or high winds, or damp or cold weather.

According to the Council, a "commonsense approach" will be taken as winter progresses, because it "appreciat[es] that long-term exposure to even mild winter weather will take a physical toll and so we may open provision at intervals to give a few days' respite."

Rough sleepers may be given accommodation in Bed and Breakfasts or hotels if demand is too high, or in the case of exceptional individual circumstances. As SWEP is an emergency measure, the accommodation will be available to those who have no local connection to Cambridge as well as foreign nationals.

Commenting on the challenges faced

“Difficulties are brought into sharper focus in the winter when it is more difficult to stay warm and dry”

by rough sleepers during colder weather, a spokesperson for Cambridge Street Aid, a service provider for rough sleepers in the city, stated: "People who are homeless and/or sleeping rough face challenges all year round: staying safe, keeping track of their possessions, managing their physical and mental health, and so on.

"These difficulties are brought into sharper focus in the winter when it is more difficult to stay warm and stay dry."

Many local groups who spoke to *Varsity* praised the Council's SWEP provision.

Homelessness charity Wintercomfort said that the "Council deliver[s] really well compared to other local authorities and are doing their best given funding constraints."

Student group Cambridge Homlessness Outreach Programme (CHOP) also praised the way SWEP is activated in "severe" and not 'cold' weather, as it takes into account the effect of rain and wind, not just temperature." They also commented on the efficiency of the programme, saying that, "Cambridge is quite unique in the collaboration that exists between service providers which make the total service provision quite efficient especially in cases like SWEP."

Asked if the Council have provided



enough beds under SWEP, Jimmy's stated that "the level of beds currently available under the SWEP provision is enough at this present time and is reviewed constantly."

However, concerns over how rough sleepers might struggle to access the SWEP provisions, or be reluctant to do so, were also raised by local groups.

CHOP argued that SWEP is "slightly ill-suited for women, or more vulnerable individuals which is at least part of the reason why some will refuse to use this service unless absolutely necessary." Street Aid also said that while there are enough beds made available through the

▲ The provisions will be available until 31st March
(LUCAS CHEBIB)



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gh sleepers

programme, they are aware that “there are people who struggle to access SWEP for one reason or another,” though they did not specify such reasons.

Responding to these concerns, a Cambridge City Council representative said: “SWEP provides distinct and separate accommodation for female rough sleepers in a safe environment away from the cold. In addition, SWEP provides three beds at the Victoria Project, Victoria Road, for individuals who may struggle with the environment at Jimmy’s or the Salvation Army.

“Whilst there will be people who will struggle to access SWEP for one reason or another, local agencies work hard as partnership to encourage people into accommodation and help overcome any barriers they may have. It’s been encouraging in this current cold spell to see people using SWEP who have previously not accessed the service.”

In their SWEP guidance, the Council noted the issue of SWEP provision for individuals who are ordinarily banned from homelessness service providers and stated that “clients banned from Jimmy’s Cambridge may be assessed by Jimmy’s and attempts then made to find them an alternative.” Jimmy’s commented that in these instances, “Each case is reviewed on an individual basis.” CCHP has also been contacted for comment.

What can you do to help people sleeping rough?

Work with charities

A Wintercomfort representative suggested students help by volunteering with local charities, and encouraged students to “stop and chat” with rough sleepers and ask them if they are in desperate need of anything.

A CHOP spokesperson also noted that “local charities often have wish lists/specific donation appeals during cold days so students can also help that way”

Have a chat and pass on useful information

Students are also encouraged to “have a chat with a homeless individual and ask if they need anything,” says a CHOP spokesperson, and should be aware when SWEP provision is available that they can “inform them about the possibility to get shelter for free at night”.

In an emergency, know who to contact

A spokesperson for Street Aid also encouraged students to “contact 111, using option 2 for a mental health crisis, or 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.”

A spokesperson for the shelter Jimmy’s Cambridge advised students to contact “the Council, Street Outreach, Wintercomfort or Jimmy’s” if they felt anyone was in need of assistance, though in the event of concerns around medical health, Emergency Services should be contacted first and foremost.”

CARBON EMISSION BEEF Farmers condemn ecological ‘hypocrisy’

The Countryside Alliance has criticised the University for its “hypocrisy” over carbon emissions, after removing beef and lamb from its menus. Freedom of Information data shows that Cambridge staff have taken 17,545 flights since 2016 to locations including Hawaii, Los Angeles and Sydney. In a letter signed by 20 livestock farmers, the Alliance argues that instead of removing red meat from its menus, the university would have a “far greater impact” by reviewing its airline policy.

WANNABE WALLABY ‘Wallaby’ on the loose in Cambridge

After hearing an “almighty thud” outside of her window while having her morning “hot drink” yesterday, a 57-year-old Arbury woman claims to have seen a Wallaby in her garden. However, the wallaby – described as “a grey/brown colour with a smooth coat and pointy little ears” – has not been seen since. A City Council representative suggested it could be a case of mistaken identity, with the real perpetrator likely being a Muntjac deer. A local search continues to no avail, and the case remains wide open.

BRIDGEMAS IS A’COMING Cambridge lights up for Christmas

Christmas lights are being switched on across Cambridge, illuminating the city’s streets and shopping centres. The Grand Arcade turned on its lights yesterday, marking the festivities with choirs and carols. On Sunday, Market Square will be the site of the Big Switch On, a whole afternoon of festive celebration, with lights set to be turned on around 5pm by a mystery celebrity. In past years, special attention has been given to trees around the city and Magdalene Bridge.

POSTBOX SOLIDARITY Sidgbox posts postal vote tweet

Sidgbox, the self-styled “sassiest book dropbox on the Sidgwick Site”, has prompted students on Twitter to arrange a postal vote for the upcoming General Election if necessary. The tweet states: “Reminder as the election approaches that I don’t take the post, but honestly have to respect the red boxes who do. Register for a postal vote by the 26th to keep them busy.” The 12th December election takes place after the end of term, and the university has urged students to make sure they vote. The deadline for voter registration is 26th November.

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Redressing the balance Expanding access in private-school dominated courses

Dylan Perera
News Correspondent

Cambridge frequently comes under fire for failing to admit a student body representative of the wider UK population, particularly with regards to its disproportionately high intake of students from private schools, as compared with nationwide figures.

Even then, in certain subjects, the proportions of state-educated students are markedly lower than the university-wide average.

In 2017/18, the latest admissions cycle for which full data is publicly available, Classics, History of Art, Land Economy and Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion saw the smallest proportions of their Home offers, less than 55%, sent out to state-educated* students.

State-educated students make up around 90% of UK-domiciled university entrants across the UK. In Cambridge, however, even though the latest admissions cycle reportedly saw a new record for state school intake, this figure has in recent years stood at just over 65%.

Varsity reached out to those faculties with the smallest proportions of state-educated students to see how they've been working to improve access and outreach in light of such figures.

Classics

The Classics three-year course – which is, incidentally, the course which saw the highest admission success rate, standing at 44.7% – requires all applicants to have studied Latin at A-level.

As confirmed by a spokesperson from the Classics department, only “a bit over a thousand” UK students study Latin A-level, with the vast majority of these coming from private schools.

As a result, just under 4 in 5 applications from domestic students to the three-year Classics course came from privately-educated pupils.

The Faculty's solution to this problem was to introduce a four-year course which does not require Latin A-level. This course is exactly the same as the three-year course, but includes a preliminary year in which students are able to learn Latin from scratch.

Last year, around 90% of offer-holders for the four-year course come from state schools. But while applications for the foundation year have been increasing, the number of places in the four-year course remains still significantly smaller than in the original 3-year course, which is the most private-school dominated of all Cambridge undergraduate courses.

2018, for example, saw 19 students admitted to the four-year course, in comparison to the 57 on the three-year course. Explaining this disparity, Dr David Butterfield, one of the Faculty of Classics Access and Outreach Officers, commented: “Institutionally,



in terms of the resources, it is difficult as it stands for us to take more than 30 prelims [students on the first year of the 4-year Classics course].”

However, he added that “the number of prelims we take is growing [...] and hopefully counterbalancing, as best we can, the steadily shrinking three-year course.” In the most recent round of applications, there was a record high of 66 applicants to the four-year course.

To encourage Latin as an extracurricular in schools that are unable to support it as a full subject, the Cambridge School Classics Project offers free resources to teachers. The Faculty also sends current undergraduate students to six local primary schools to teach Latin, as part of their attempt to “encourage Classics extracurricularly in schools that simply aren't able to support it in the timetable.”

The Faculty of Classics also run the ‘Come, See, Be Inspired’ initiative, which consists of inviting groups of 12 to 36 students from state schools to the Faculty. “They have a day which is made up of a lecture from a current academic, a tour of a college and engagement with a Schools Liaison Officer at that College and lunch there, a tour of the Cast Gallery and a general half-day opening their eyes to the Classics.”

However, Dr Butterfield notes: “For a lot of schools, it is not a simple business to pop to Cambridge”. Therefore, the Faculty plans to expand their unique ‘Come, See, Be Inspired’ initiative into “a much more active, roadshow tour” in schools around the country.

Land Economy

According to a spokesperson for the Department of Land Economy, the subject has an issue with publicity.

State-educated students accounted

▲ **The Faculty of Divinity, one of a number which have struggled to ensure a representative student body**
(LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“In 2017/18...Classics, History of Art, Land Economy and Theology...saw less than 55% [of their Home offers] sent out to state-educated students”

for only about half of applications from Home Students to Land Economy in the 2017/18 admissions cycle.

“Land Economy is a subject unique to Cambridge and we are working hard to raise its profile among state school students, teachers and careers advisers with a renewed focus on social media promotion and outreach activities.”

“We hold taster lectures for the Sutton Trust Summer Schools, Sutton Scholars, Experience Cambridge, and Teach First and partner on events with Cambridge Schools Eco-Council and other green initiatives. Land Economy also plays an active role in recruitment activities such as the Cambridge Open Days, Oxford and Cambridge Student Conferences, the Cambridge Teachers' Conference, and Subject Master classes.”

They stressed, further, that “the Department has one of the most international intakes of any course, with more than 55% of our applicants coming from overseas.”

“The course's intake of UK students is so small that annual fluctuations of only a few students can have a dramatic impact on its maintained/independent school ratio.”

Regardless, the Department is looking to expand its outreach activities through a planned collaboration with Urban Plan, a programme run by the Urban Land Institute for state school students, offering workshops on urban development.”

History of Art

The History of Art course had 38.5% of its incoming students from state schools in October 2019.

As with the case of Land Economy, Christina Faraday, an Affiliated Lecturer in the Department of Art History, noted

that they “have this problem of trying to reach students who have never heard of the subject.”

But even those who have heard of it may still be reluctant to apply. She said, “History of Art is not studied much in state schools so state school students are often very reluctant to apply.”

“[History of Art] is seen as this thing that you do from a posh school. It's not got a very good reputation in that respect, and that's something that we are painfully aware of and really want to change because History of Art is such a fascinating subject and it's really for everyone.”

The percentage of offers going to state school students increased from 17% in 2015 to 31% in 2018.

Head of the Department of Art History, Professor Caroline van Eck said that “the Department sees this as a positive reflection of its outreach work over the past few years, which has included active participation in Sutton Trust Summer Schools and a programme of Taster Days throughout the academic years.”

Coming from a state secondary school herself, Faraday said “it was a big decision and it was scary, but I decided to take a risk and apply and I could not have made a better decision.”

Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion

The Faculty of Divinity, which teaches Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion, also traditionally struggles to assemble a student body representative of wider society.

Dr. Danielle Redhead, the Outreach Officer for the Faculty of Divinity, commented: “Against a backdrop of falling numbers of students taking GCSE and A-level Religious Studies, the Faculty is working hard to engage with students, especially those from widening participation backgrounds.”

To this end, the Faculty hosts regular ‘Study Days’ and Faculty open days, targeting schools that do not traditionally send students to Oxbridge. A spokesperson for the Faculty commented: “We are one of the very few Faculties that actively encourages school visits, during which we put on taster lectures and offer application guidance sessions.”

On top of this, they work with the Department of Education, to produce materials for the teaching of Religious Studies at secondary school and host training days for school teachers.

“Last year, we created the 50 Religious Treasures collection to inspire younger students and we hold an annual film competition for students in Year 9 to Year 13.”

*State schools – also referred to as Maintained schools – include Comprehensive Schools, Grammar Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education & Tertiary Education Colleges.

Thousands sign petition to stop introduction of buses onto busy city cycle route

Bethan Holloway-Strong
News Correspondent

Over 2,100 people have signed a petition opposing plans to convert Adams Road, Cambridge's "busiest peak time cycle route," into a busway.

Adams Road connects Cambridge city centre with the West Cambridge site, making it a popular cycle route for commuting students. It is currently used by pedestrians, bicycles and cars.

Great Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) Cambourne to Cambridge Better Public Transport Project, however, would see this route converted into a busway. According to the petition, this would result in as many as 30 buses an hour travelling the route, which currently sees up to 22,000 bicycles a week.

Dan Strauss, coordinator of the SYCR campaign and organizer of the petition, has expressed concern that this could lead to frequent conflict between vehicles and cyclists on the narrow road and would lead to noise and air pollution for local residents.

The Cambourne to Cambridge project began in late 2015, with six route op-



▲ The petition has been organised by the Save Your Cycle Route campaign (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

tions suggested. One of these proposed linking the Busway with Grange Road via the Rifle Range track, a plan that was popular as it allowed for segregated transit infrastructure, minimised the impact on wildlife areas and had the most benefit to cyclists, pedestrians and passengers.

In a project consultation comparing this with the Adams Road route, 48% of respondents said they preferred this

off-road option to an on-road route with public transport priority lanes or junction improvements. However, now in the project's second phase, the Adams Road plan has been declared the most likely option by GCP.

A GCP spokesperson told *Varsity*: "The Adams Road option is being revisited in light of a number of factors, including the impact of the Rifle Range option on the Green Belt and the West Fields."

In response to the safety and environmental concerns raised by Strauss' petition, the spokesperson also stated that "a full road safety audit will be carried out as part of scheme development" and that only "modern, sustainable, electric" buses will be in use on the route.

GCP has also offered other cycling options, such as segregated cycle paths on Madingley Road that will be in use before the Cambourne to Cambridge Project is completed. "The Madingley Road cycle lanes are fabulous," Strauss told *Varsity*.

"But what about Adams Road and its thousands of cyclists? Cycle traffic on Adams Road is about 80% higher than on Madingley Road." He also explained that this alternative route does not go in the direction of the town centre, which is the destination for the vast majority of cyclists.

"The vast majority of cyclists who use this route, and whose lives will be endangered if buses are allowed to use it, are University students or employees," Strauss said. "The University must put maximum pressure on the GCP to keep this route safe for cyclists."

The University, one of GCP's five partners, has been under pressure to make progress in its efforts to encourage sustainable travel among its members since a report released this year found that it has missed key environmental targets.

Whilst car use rose between 2016/17 and 2017/18 and bus use remained static, cycling rates decreased, falling from 42% to 39%.

In response, the University developed their 2019-2024 Transport Strategy, as part of which it committed to "work[ing] with its partners in GCP and the Combined Authority to deliver improved cycling infrastructure that delivers more direct, attractive and safer cycling routes."

Regarding the Adams Road plan, a University spokesperson told *Varsity*: "We continue to work with our partners in the Greater Cambridge Partnership to ensure all proposals are in line with not just our own strategy, but also the wider priorities of the community."

The decision will go before the GCP Board early next year. The Cambourne to Cambridge Project is scheduled to be completed in 2024.

Cambridge warned of mumps cases in student population

Chloe Bayliss
Senior News Editor

In a post on their JCR page, Homerton students were warned by their nurse that "there are cases of Mumps appearing in the Cambridge Student population".

Mumps is a contagious viral infection that often affects the parotid glands, located under the ears. This creates a notorious "hamster cheek" look caused by painful swelling in the glands. Other symptoms of the illness include headaches, joint pain and a high temperature. It is spread through "infected droplets of saliva that can be inhaled or picked up from surfaces and transferred into the mouth or nose."

Students at Newnham were urged to "seek medical attention promptly" if they experienced any of the symptoms.

One anonymous student who had Mumps last year spoke to *Varsity* about their experiences with the illness.

They said that symptoms such as "dry throat, general tiredness or fatigue, and slightly enlarged glands on the sides of [their] throat" had begun to appear two days before their final exams.

In the UK, it is national policy to pro-

vide two doses of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine, and this vaccine can be administered to anyone of any age. The official advice from the University is that "all students ensure that they have had two doses of the MMR vaccine before coming to university" to prevent an outbreak of the infection.

A post on Newnham College's facebook page yesterday, however, also warned that "it is sometimes possible to get mumps even if you've been vaccinated."

This was the case of the student who spoke to *Varsity*, as when asked if they were vaccinated, they replied that they had had "both of the MMR vaccinations, so fully up to date."

Sandy Chambers, the nurse at Homerton, urged students to "get vaccinated if they hadn't already been vaccinated".

"Although most often a mild illness, Mumps can cause severe complications".

Good prevention practices include the regular washing of hands, and disposing of tissues quickly when they're used.

According to a BBC report, there were over 300 cases of Mumps at Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham in September.



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Interviews

‘The people of Hong Kong are leading the struggle, but they deserve our support’, says Ben Rogers

Jess Ma speaks to the human rights campaigner about Hong Kong and international solidarity

In the past five months, Hong Kong has been shrouded in tear gas fumes, with gunshots relentlessly punctuating the tides of determined resistance. The protests, stemming from the recent extradition bill, soon spiralled into widespread resistance against unchecked police brutality and a willful government that ignores any voices of dissent. As Hongkongers call for international support and express solidarity with resistance movements in other corners of the world, Benedict Rogers, a British human rights activist, is continuing his work in the UK, liaising with Parliament and calling for the enactment of Magnitsky law against China.

Late in the evening, following a talk in Queens' College, *Varsity* sat down with Benedict Rogers, founder of NGO Hong Kong Watch and co-founder and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party's human rights commission, to discuss Hong Kong, the values of overseas campaigning, and how state politics and Britain's colonial legacy are enmeshed in the ongoing protests. Greeted with great enthusiasm, Rogers started off by explaining the origins of his NGO Hong Kong Watch. In 2007, Rogers was barred entry to Hong Kong, having previously criticised China's increasing threat to democracy in the city and spoken out against the detention of pro-democracy activists. The following day, Rogers announced his plans to set up the NGO as a way to make his ongoing pro-democracy efforts more sustainable and to raise more international awareness. "When I talked to people in parliament, in the media and elsewhere, the level of awareness about what was happening in Hong Kong was really low."

"I was shocked by how little people knew about how Hong Kong's freedoms were being eroded," he said.

To Rogers, Hong Kong was initially an



▲ Benedict Rogers (RITA KAN)



offshoot of his interest in China, which eventually became a personal cause of its own. He first visited Hong Kong after a six-month stint teaching English in Qingdao during his gap year, and then, between 1997 and 2002, began his career as a journalist in the city.

"I grew to love Hong Kong, it was a city that had all the freedoms that we enjoy, and was at the crossroads of Asia. When I realised that those freedoms are increasingly threatened over the last 5 or 10 years, I felt that I wanted to do something to help speak out for Hong Kong, partly because I believe in freedom and human rights, partly because I lived there, so there was a certain sense of personal responsibility for Hong Kong, and also because, as a British citizen, I felt Britain had both a moral and legal responsibility to speak out for Hong Kong, and I wanted to play my part to urge the British government to do that."

There's been a surge of discussion surrounding Hong Kong's colonial legacy during the recent movement, as Hongkongers seek to redefine their identity internationally. Long gone are the days when Hong Kong brandished its gleaming skyscrapers and stock market for a place in the world. Narratives are being redrawn and recoloured, filling in the gaps between global trade and local identity. Britain inevitably comes into the picture for its colonial legacy, with the Sino-British Joint Declaration identified as the last thread entangling the two. For Rogers, the Declaration is of great importance, as the treaty "gives Britain specific responsibilities to ensure that the promises we made to the people of Hong

▲ Protests in Hong Kong on 29th September

(ANONYMOUS)

“Concrete policies are much more effective than just rhetoric”

Kong prior to the handover are kept". It is this, in his view, which distinguishes the situation in Hong Kong from other international issues for Britain.

"For probably the first 15 years in the 22 years since the handover, Britain completely failed to live up to its responsibilities to speak up for Hong Kong. It's partly because One Country Two Systems was working reasonably well, but still, I think if you look at the six monthly report that the Foreign Office publishes twice a year, up until a few years ago they were incredibly weak [...] and I think we placed too much emphasis on our commercial relationship with Hong Kong, and not enough on our responsibility to ensure that Hong Kong's freedoms are protected."

Featured on countless headlines, not only did Hong Kong's protests take on an international dimension, but dived themselves headfirst into international politics. Hong Kong protestors have expressed solidarity with worldwide resistance movements. There have been widespread calls for western governments to support Hong Kong through policy interventions. Proponents argue that this kind of "international support" might bear impact on China, and thus affect Hong Kong's situation. Rogers emphasised, "it is the people of Hong Kong who are leading the struggle, but they deserve our support from outside in mobilising the international community to put pressure on the Hong Kong government and the Beijing government."

Rogers envisions international support as involving pressure on both the Hong Kong and Beijing governments. This, he says, would come first through diplomatic

pressures, with world leaders speaking out on the issue, then through policy measures such as the Magnitsky Act, a law passed in the United States in 2012, initially serving to impose visa bans and asset freezes on Russian officials linked to the death of a lawyer in a Moscow prison following complaints of mistreatment. Hostile policies and discourse can put vital pressure on governments committing human rights abuses, Rogers said, but with national interests considered a backbone in politics, it might be worth approaching these policies cautiously.

Rogers argued that there is a strong incentive to care about Hong Kong since the erosion of freedoms is no longer a territorially constrained issue.

"There is growing evidence of China using its influence in universities around the world, in the corporate world, even in the political world, and I think people are waking up to this more and more, that China is no longer a far away dictatorship that represses its own people, it's actually becoming a threat to our freedoms." He added: "That's every reason why we should be standing up against it, not only to defend the rights of Hong Kong but the rights of our own countries."

With steadfast optimism, Rogers suggested that whether Hong Kong's cause can remain on the table depends on states' engagement with China. "If countries stand up together against China, it may have more effect." A Magnitsky-style sanction, to him, will have powerful individuals "start to feel a direct impact on their pocket", with the result that they are "more likely to take the international community seriously." He stressed that "concrete policies are much more effective than just rhetoric." While agreeing that China's human rights situation has worsened in recent years, Rogers argued that international engagement has only contributed to the problem. "I think we have not just engaged, we have kowtowed to China. The more you kowtow, the more they think they can get away with it."

For Rogers, replacing rhetoric with concrete policy responses should be the way forward for foreign governments grappling with powerful regimes committing serious human rights abuses. "Until now we've never really had sanctions or meaningful measures, we've just had talk. Or often, we haven't had talk - governments have stayed silent. So that's why concrete policies may have some effect we haven't seen in recent years." The flame of molotov cocktails amid simmering tear gas canisters and well-positioned ammunition, all set against a backdrop of boiling rage under a mix of tear gas and smoke, have propelled Hong Kong into an international spotlight which it is at once so familiar and so foreign. When watching from afar, overarching networks of power may seem to be a path to reach those on the ground, yet speeches and policies can be lost in translation, and, at this point, real, tangible action is necessary.

Hong Kong's battle is not constrained to the city. As Rogers said, international response is vital in keeping the movement on the table. In the future, we must figure out how to ensure that our solidarity stretches beyond simple words and reaches the ground with real impact.

“For the first 15 years after the handover, Britain completely failed to speak up for Hong Kong”

'A real and worrying impact' EU students on Brexit and the prospect of applying for settled status

► Continued from front page

settled status and 38% were granted pre-settled status. Settled status has been granted in England (61%) at a lower rate than in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (65%, 67%, and 69% respectively). In Cambridge the percentage of concluded applications granted settled status is 52%.

The Liberal Democrat candidate for Cambridge Rod Cantrill commented, "Too many EU nationals in Cambridge are deeply anxious about their right to stay. Many of them fill vital roles in our health service and our schools. It's disgraceful for the Conservative government to leave them in legal limbo like this."

"Families and children must not be made to live under a cloud of uncertainty any longer."

MP for Cambridge, Daniel Zeichner, was also contacted for comment.

Speaking to *Varsity* about the figures, few Cambridge students expressed strong concerns about their own status in the UK. EU students currently studying at the university are guaranteed that they can finish their education on the



▲ A People's Vote Rally in London (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

same terms they started on.

However, as one EU undergraduate, who asked to remain anonymous, noted, "Brexit will have a real and worrying impact on working class [EU] kitchen staff, and they will have a hard time renewing their visas."

Edwin Balani, a fourth-year Engineering student from Magdelene, highlighted

the strange position for individuals who have lived in the UK all their lives but have to apply for settled status. Balani commented, "I wouldn't consider myself a foreign student, I've lived here since I was one. But obviously I need to get settled status".

Echoing a common sentiment among the undergraduate students that *Varsity*

“Families and children must not be made to live under a cloud of uncertainty”

spoke to, he said that he "hadn't applied yet, mainly out of laziness and out of principle or hope that Brexit won't go ahead."

Hungarian national Olivér Janzen, a PhD candidate in pure mathematics at Trinity College, has already been granted settled status, having done his undergraduate and master's degrees at Cambridge. He said he would be applying for citizenship and is hoping to continue research at the university.

Despite this, Janzen commented that Brexit, "certainly makes the UK less attractive" for researchers.

He explained, "it probably makes it harder for researchers from the EU to come to the UK, so even if someone does come here to work, he or she may find that there are fewer colleagues to collaborate with. It's also not clear to me whether the UK will be able to use the research funds of the EU."

"Finally," he added, "if the number of EU citizens living in the UK drops, that just makes the country a less appealing place for me. I have several very good friends who are not British, and who experience similar cultural and language difficulties. Losing some of these friends would be unfortunate."

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Features

Behind the curtains, ballet is fixated on controlling women's bodies

Ellie Hunt, who danced ballet for over 15 years, explores the toxic 'culture of sacrifice' that she noticed backstage

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of body image issues, including disordered eating. It also contains discussion of non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit images.

High in the rafters of the Royal Opera House auditorium, I settle against the railing and try to find the most comfortable position to stand in for the next three hours. I had a perfect view of the stage, and an opportunity to see Liam Scarlett's new production of *Swan Lake* was a much needed getaway from the intensity of the Cambridge bubble in early June.

The lights go down and a hush settles over the audience. In the split-second of electric excitement and anticipation before the orchestra starts to play, I imagine the scenes unfolding backstage, scenes that I know all too well.

The backstage world is as fantastically and whimsically magical as any of the great story ballets the dancers perform onstage. Dismembered prop heads, costumed mannequins, swords and puppets lie lifeless in the shadows. Billowing curtains disappear into the darkness high above while dancers contort their bodies into wonderful, impossible shapes by the spectral reflections of the stage lights.

It is a mystical no man's land between two very different worlds, the shadowy realm between spotlight and streetlight. But when it comes to the politics of ballet, this disparity and this backstage world are what we need to examine most closely.

I have been dancing for over 15 years, and still perform in shows, but I stopped dancing competitively at the age of 17. I remember the constant side-eye at competitions, the whispering and giggling.

I often hid in the dressing room as long as possible to avoid them. There

“As I stumbled through those awkward adolescent years, the pressures on my body became more intense”

were other girls like me, too shy to make a career in this cut-throat profession. We would exchange small smiles and a quiet 'good luck' to each other every year in solidarity.

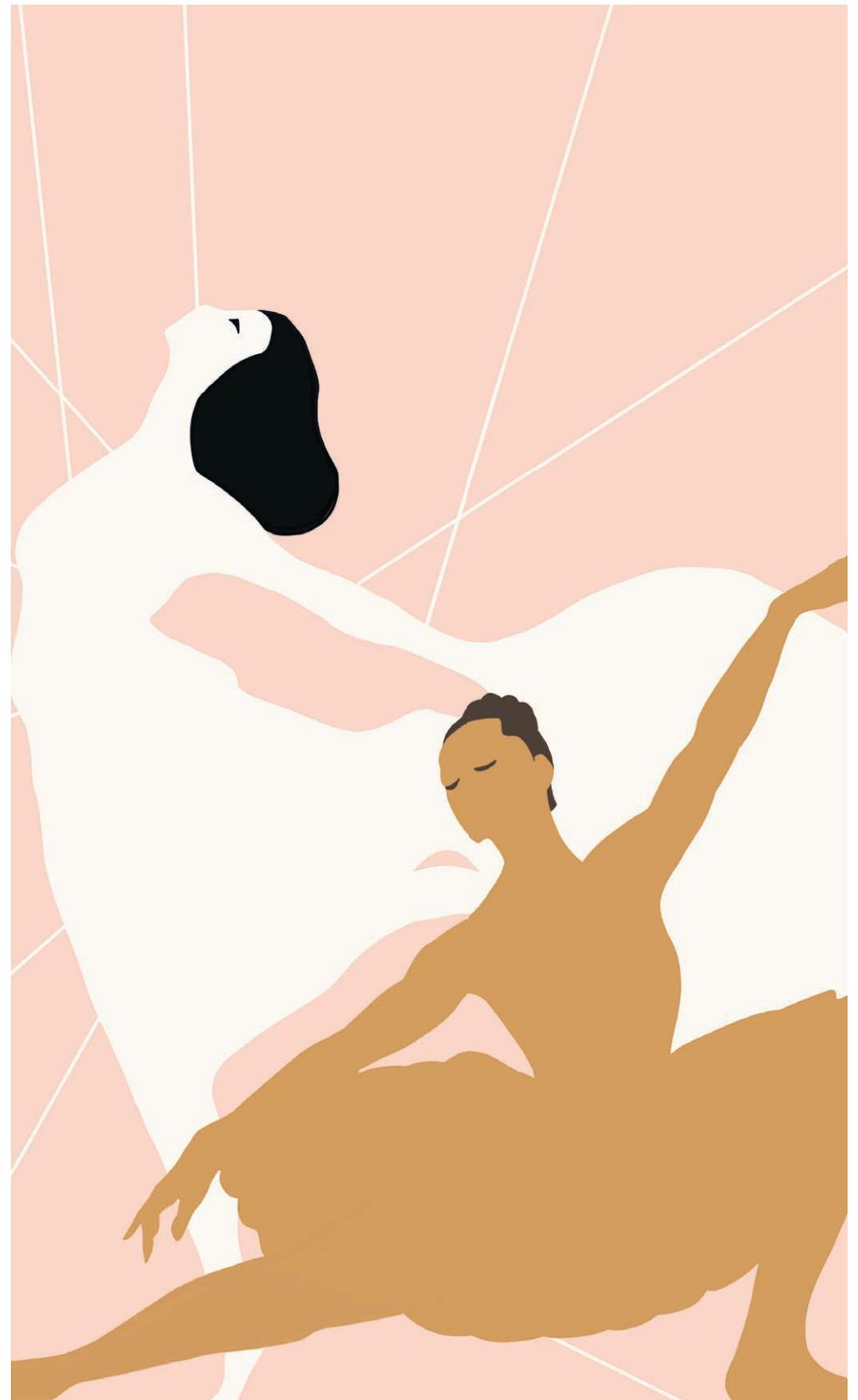
As I got older and stumbled through those awkward adolescent years, the pressures on my body became more intense. I remember one guy from school telling me he never would have guessed I danced because of the way I looked.

I remember my own dance teacher jokingly telling me after I returned from a fortnight-long holiday to New York that I had maybe eaten too many hash browns. Of course my stamina was going to be down a little after having a necessary break from a weekly rehearsal schedule that was between two and five hours a day, five days a week. But back then, I immediately thought, *weight gain*.

Ballet dancers have to be small and light enough to lift, or strong enough to do the lifting. It goes without saying that they need to have both the stamina and inner strength to endure their Herculean schedules and meet the demands of choreographers and directors. Their bodies are revered to the point where Einstein called them 'athletes of God.'

But when an art form places as much pressure and focus on the body as ballet does, body image issues will unsurprisingly follow. There has always been a history of eating disorders in professional ballet academies, and some encourage a 'culture of sacrifice,' heightened by the extreme methods of teaching favoured by certain ballet masters.

Nowadays, leading ballet companies invest considerable resources — in physiotherapy staff and equipment, for example — to ensure their dancers are as physically healthy as humanly pos-



“The backstage is a mystical no man's land between two very different worlds, the shadowy realm between spotlight and streetlight”

sible. But this 'culture of sacrifice' still remains, and often goes too far.

Close your eyes and picture a ballerina. Most of you will have pictured an elegant, graceful, extremely long and extremely thin, emotionally detached, entrancingly cold woman dressed in a tutu and pointe shoes.

This image of the archetypal ballerina was popularised by George Balanchine, who founded and directed the New York City Ballet, and was among the most influential choreographers of the twentieth century. The 'Balanchine Ballerina' is a legacy of his immense impact on the art form and reputation as a modern master in the world of ballet.

But there is a dark side to his legacy. Gelsey Kirkland, a protégé of Balanchine, suggested in her autobiography that he was responsible for the ano-

▲ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

rexia, bulimia, and drug addiction that almost killed her. In the *Huffington Post*, Elizabeth Kiem wrote about the ‘human costs’ of his method of teaching and style of choreography — most importantly, the prevalence of eating and body disorders in the ballet world. Historian Elizabeth Kendall has traced the origins of the ‘Balanchine Body’ to Balanchine’s youth in St. Petersburg at the time of the Russian Revolution and Civil War.

During this period of extreme deprivation, the dancers were as hungry as their audience, and sustained by a uniquely powerful reserve of inner and physical strength. The basis of our stereotypes of the ballerina, then, are women whose bodies were moulded by hunger, who had to fight to take control of the reserves of strength left in them.

As a young dancer, Balanchine had to exercise control over his own body; and as an artistic director, he sought to exert this control over his dancers’ bodies too. The most well-known example of this is his treatment of Suzanne Farrell, who was fired when she refused to marry and have children with him.

The recent scandal over ex-principal dancers Chase Finlay, Amar Ramasar, and Zachary Catazaro, who were forced out of the NYCB for sharing sexually explicit photos of female company members without their consent, remind us that this problem is ongoing.

“
Stories about the female body and the exertion of control over it are at the very core of ballet
”

It is a shadowy truth which seems to prowl in the shadows cast by the NYCB’s lavish stage curtain, doused by the eternal spotlight of its mythic artists.

Stories about the female body and the exertion of control over it are at the very core of ballet: *Swan Lake* to *Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppelia* to *Romeo and Juliet*.

Ballerinas have always struggled to maintain autonomy over their own body when every day it is subjected to the scrutiny of artistic directors, choreographers, and audiences who all expect a living, breathing stereotype.

Misty Copeland told *Stretch* about her own body image issues and binge-eating disorder, which she developed after an interview with the artistic staff of the American Ballet Theatre.

Copeland recalled how after she was prescribed birth control pills at the age of 19 to induce puberty so that she could cope with a backbone injury, they told her: “your body has changed. [...] we’d like to see you lengthen”. Copeland said that “that, of course, was just a polite, safe way of saying, ‘you need to lose weight.’” Nevertheless, she defied expectations and her career took flight.

Copeland is a trailblazer in ballet. She’s the first African American principal ballerina of the American Ballet Theatre, championing inclusivity in the world of ballet, which has historically been an overwhelmingly white-domi-

nated profession.

The ‘ballet blanc’ aesthetic has always run skin deep, and with Nutcracker season around the corner, and its rendition of Arabian, Chinese, Spanish and Russian national dances, this cannot be overlooked.

Inclusivity is not just for young dancers who need role models, but the audiences too, who see themselves represented onstage and can connect deeper to the stories they see.

There is still a lot of work to be done, but perhaps it starts with acknowledging some of the racially problematic elements at the heart of our beloved story ballets.

If we truly love ballet, we cannot allow it to think it exists in a world frozen in time, its own beautiful glass bubble, spinning forever atop an ancient music box.

These pieces are still being performed hundreds of years after their creation, but they are revivals and restagings; national dances now need to be handled with far more respect than when many of them were choreographed in the nineteenth century.

As the lights come up and the curtain falls again, I don’t notice the pain in my feet for the magical sensation of hundreds of people having participated in a shared emotional experience that takes us far away from reality.

But it’s time to come back to the present. It’s not a happy ending. The

“
We cannot allow ballet to think that it exists in a world frozen in time, its own beautiful glass bubble
”

maidens have turned against the villain and are free of their curse-bound swan bodies, but the Odette that Prince Siegfried lifts from the lake has died.

As the dancers embrace the rapturous applause they have worked so hard for and deserve, sweat and tears mingling on their cheeks, jewels glistening on their tutus, standing tall, elegant and graceful, a tiny voice whispers in my mind: ‘What if? Could that have been you?’

But after a brief pause, I also have to ask myself a follow-up question, which helps me make peace with my wistful yearning for another life. ‘Would you have been happy if it were?’ The enjoyment of ballet as an art form is for everybody and every body — in every shape.

If you have been affected by any of the content of this article:

B-eat Eating disorders provides useful information and resources, as well as a helpline at 0808 801 0677. The Students’ Union Advice Service provides a more comprehensive list of support resources.

“
After a brief pause, I ask myself, ‘would you have been happy if you were?’
”

Battling the winter blues

Juliette Odolant shares her tips on how to get through winter’s shorter days

Asking for an Australian friend: what is a puffer jacket? Can looking like the Michelin Man pass as a deliberate fashion statement? Is it even possible to be simultaneously warm and fashionable? How many lamps can I switch on before I get called out for not caring about the environment?

These are questions I did not expect to be preoccupied with as I began my first year of university. And yet, here we are. Despite being aware of the UK’s reputation for constant rain, the grim reality of English weather hit me like a truck.

With great horror, I discovered the choice clubbing outfit of English girls dashing to another abysmal Wednesday Cindies: it remains, perennially, a mini skirt and tube top, regardless of the thermometer’s dive to well below zero degrees celsius.

Before learning that this questionable tactic was to avoid the cloakroom fee, and that alcohol jackets are very popular and relatively warm here, I began to feel quite alone in my plight. Was I the only student feeling the burn of this bitter winter wind? Are Cambridge students naturally nocturnal,

and therefore unbothered by the ridiculously short and dark days?

Was I destined to forever be the odd one out, remaining wrapped up in three layers plus coat, scarf, and beanie, only peeling off my layers in a hard-boiled-egg-esque manner once certain I could trust the relative warmth of Danger-spoons?

Following a few conversations with my corridor-mates, I realised I was not alone. My Australian background had not, in fact, made me an anomaly in this country of supposed cold climate deniers. From passing “winter blues” to seasonal affective disorder, it seems that virtually all students suffer to some extent from the shift in seasons.

Although no longer confronted with high school’s gruesome 8am starts, our late night outings, the 3am grind, and early morning rises ensuing a weekend of intense procrastination means that we are essentially nocturnal creatures. Our access to daylight is limited, and shorter, darker days only aggravate the situation.

Tasks my friends and I used to enjoy or find manageable have become near impossible. The shrill cry of my alarm clock at any other time of the day triggers instinctive feelings of dread.

When waiting until 4pm to switch on the library desk lamps began to feel like an achievement, I began to search for ways to solve my seasonal worries.

How best, then, to remedy a bad case of the winter blues? There are a number of relatively legitimate solutions to this issue. For momentary seasonal angst, taking vitamin D supple-

► Illustration by Alisa Santikarn for Varsity



“
Was I the only student feeling the burn of this bitter winter wind?
”

ments, exercising regularly, and getting as much natural sunlight as possible by increasing time spent outside or sitting next to windows while working can be helpful.

If you think you may genuinely be suffering from seasonal affective disorder, get in touch with your college welfare officers or your college nurse; you might be encouraged to consider light therapy or even Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

My own methods to combat what I have identified as a simultaneous

“
Virtually all students suffer to some extent from the shift in seasons
”

case of winter and week five blues are more light-hearted and questionably effective.

They involve: amassing a tragically big collection of lamps in my room, makeshift corridor-bowling sessions with friends (my current preferred method of exercise when I haven’t the time or motivation to hit the gym), industrial-size jars of vegemite (not for everyone, I’ll admit), and a ridiculous amount of Uniqlo heat-tech thermals.

If all else fails, try moving to Girton. I hear it’s warmer up there.

Features

I have mapped this city onto my body



Charley Barnard reflects on how the way she sees herself and her body changes with the seasons

Content Note: This article contains discussions about body image, dieting, street harassment, and PTSD.

It's winter in Paris. Finally, it's time for long coats, jeans, wooly jumpers and miles of scarves. Soft material hugs my neck, my hands are in my pockets. From head to toe I am covered, wrapped up warm and safe from stares. My eyes can finally rise to meet the city I walk in.

It is a relief compared to the summer months, when 35-plus degree heat kept seasoned Parisians out of the city, while I, a newcomer, did the daily commute, constantly sticky and unable to breathe. I wore clothes that touched me as little as possible. I wore shorts, T-shirts, linen, sandals. I showed more of my body than

“ I spent a summer with my eyes down, headphones in, not wanting to look up at the city where I used to dream of living ”

I ever have, attracting attention that I am lucky to have never received in England. Every time I left the house, I was greeted by stares, comments, shouts, lewd gestures, men whose eyes lit up when they saw me, viewing me as a treat solely for their enjoyment.

I spent a summer with my eyes down, headphones in, not wanting to look up at the city where I used to dream of living. Every time I made eye contact with a man and saw that flash of delight, I could feel him mentally undressing me, fucking me in his mind. I wanted to vomit.

They say that people with PTSD find it difficult to feel safe again, something I have felt acutely since my trauma and diagnosis. I have found it difficult to reclaim control of my body, and I know I am more sensitive than most to the eyes and actions of men in Paris. I have a tendency to see risks where there are none, and my fight-or-flight response works overtime.

When speaking about my experience, I minimise it, partly because I fear I'm overreacting, and partly because I feel it's old news. Catcalling is so common, that I wonder what I could possibly add to the conversation. And if street harassment is the worst thing to happen to me on my year abroad, I am much luckier

than most.

But my experience of Paris has been unique. I have mapped this city on to my body. One day, faced with yet another man who had gone out of his way to gesture squeezing my chest in broad daylight, I found myself considering my size, my shape. Maybe if I was smaller, maybe if my hips were slimmer and my clothes hugged less. If I dropped a cup size or two. If my thighs could just not... jiggle so much.

I knew immediately that this is distinctly un-feminist: the problem is never me, the problem is never my body, the problem is a society that tells men that women's bodies belong to them, that catcalling and street harassment are just a part of life, it's actually just a compliment, babe, don't be so stuck up!

But mental illnesses like PTSD can manifest in unexpected ways, and they don't care that blaming my curves for my harassment is un-feminist. It was an idea that stuck. I wanted to become smaller to fit into the tiny gaps left on the Metro.

But most of all, I wanted to become smaller for the men. The men on the street, the men on the tram, the men in waiting rooms and supermarket queues and tourist attractions. The men that are everywhere with their eyes and their

▲ Illustration by Charley Barnard for Varsity

“ No matter my size, if my skin is on display, men will feel entitled to it ”

comments. I thought I was giving them less to look at, less to comment on.

I feel part of this time was robbed from me. I spent a summer miserable and scared, calling my partner (who remained in England) every time I went anywhere alone after sunset, becoming irrationally terrified if he wasn't free to chat. I dreaded the hottest days, feeling frustrated with myself for blaming my body, knowing deep down that it was pointless.

No change to my body can change the patriarchy. No matter my size, if my skin is on display, men will feel entitled to it.

Now it is winter, and with my curves out of sight, I can look up again, finally take Paris in. On my walk to the Metro station, there is often a little tabby cat that sits on a windowsill on the first floor.

Men don't look twice at me. There is freedom in being contained by clothes. I feel safer and happier, although I am still trying to reconcile the destructiveness of my relationship with my body.

I have learned a new, insidious form of self-inflicted violence: that men can hurt me without so much as laying a finger on me. I refuse to let it continue.

My therapy starts this month.

Time moves at a different pace here

Henry Lloyd-Hughes writes about procrastinating in a city where time moves too quickly

I've never been one to self-proclaim talent, but if procrastination was a sport, let's just say I'd be a world champion. Pair this, my most abundant attribute, with the tight deadlines that Cambridge demands, and I'm left with a frantic weekly sprint, fuelled by copious amounts of caffeine, the night before an essay is due. Yet, I feel like the work produced is never my best, and falls very short of the finish line.

One of the main things that has led to my immeasurably high levels of procrastination is the fact that, despite being five weeks in, I don't really know what is expected of me. Part of me feels silly for feeling this way since my mind immediately offers up the answer: 'the very best of your ability is what is expected, consistently, week-in week-out, obviously it is... you're at Cambridge.' And this sort of self-imposed pressure, pressure to live up to the expectations I have of myself, is why it is so much easier to occupy myself with mindless tasks to distract from real responsibilities.

Starting the fifth week of term, I have found myself still completely unaware of where I stand. As much as I recognise the teaching-style here is amazingly individualised and academically unparalleled, it intensifies and magnifies the repercussion of my incessant procrastination. This is because time here seems to work differently, something I have had to come to terms with very quickly. It feels like time has become my most valuable commodity. The lazy days of summer where I was lucky enough to have all the time in the world, to do whatever I wanted, I know label as some of the richest of my life. And I am now very much poor (both figuratively and literally) with a weekly payment due in the form of an essay submission. It's a constant cycle of meeting one deadline only to be slapped in the face with another. This is why I wish that I could effectively eradicate my apparent need to procrastinate. Perhaps it's bred from the shift to more independent study. I suppose the structure of registered hourly periods at school forced me into at least some sort of productivity, compared to only six fixed lectures a week now. But regardless, by now, it is increasingly obvious that my procrastination is pretty endemic.

It's a massive slippery slope. As soon as I submit one essay it leads me to think



▲ Are my peers just naturally better at managing their time? (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

“*In the back of my head, there's the constant trickle of guilt which builds into cascading regret*”

I need a well-deserved break. A couple of nights off at least. But it has come to my attention, very quickly, that 'a couple nights off' is just further self-sabotage in relation to meeting academic deadlines. It again leads to an internal conflict. On the one hand, I want to be the best student possible, submit all my essays in on time but, simultaneously, I want, and need, time to relax. This conflict is why procrastination is so thoroughly detrimental. Not only is it incubating stress, when I have to write a coherent essay in a matter of hours, but the time I have spent procrastinating also isn't mentally or emotionally beneficial because in the back of my head there's the constant trickle of guilt which builds into cascading regret. It leads me to question what the rest of my time at Cambridge will look like. Will it be that, in every moment I'm not being academically productive, I'm incessantly envisioning the pile of books I should be reading.

Last week, the levels of my procrastination reached new heights, leaving me and my essay feedback at an all time

“*Without realising, it's somehow dark again outside*”

low. I spent 2 hours arranging and re-arranging the photos stuck to my pin board which then led to a further hour of reliving those memories through automated iPhone memory slideshows. All that achieved was making me wish I wasn't in such a dark, miserable and cold climate. Then there of course, is the inevitable pit of social media, countless hours scrolling through Twitter and Instagram feeds and not to mention watching Youtube videos. Seriously I am ashamed of the amount of time I've invested into aimless but addictive videos such as 'Exploring a haunted mansion', 'X-factor's angriest contestants', '10 things in the Harry Potter films you missed' - to give a very minute sample. Then, without realising, it's somehow dark again outside and the entire day which seemed like such a large, boundless entity of time this morning has dissipated into a scarce evening and I'm suddenly too hungry to think of anything else but eating dinner.

My attempts at addressing my procrastination have ended in self-recognition

but so far no means of practically addressing it. Maybe it's impossible. Maybe I'm just immune to coloured study timetables and motivational quotes. And let's not mention the library. A space where there is the constant background tap of keyboards, a smug mutter of productivity which might as well be shouting in my face "look how much work I'm doing".

It all culminates to make me wonder whether my peers are naturally better at managing their time, being more productive and making more out of their time than I am. I think it adds to this lingering feeling of, do I deserve to be here? Would someone make more of this opportunity than me, when I'm wasting hours at a time?

All I seem to know is that no-matter how hard I try, I'll always run into procrastination. And yes, I can fully appreciate the whole-hearted irony in the fact I have just written an article as a means of procrastinating when I have an essay due in the immediate future. But they do say, stick to what you're good at...



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Centre Building

Opinion



The CUCFS model lineup replicates high fashion's toxic 'beauty' standards

Students must challenge the dangerous norms set by society

Georgie Newson-Errey

Earlier this week, the model lineup for Cambridge University's annual Charity Fashion Show (CUCFS) was released. CUCFS, now in its fifth year, provides up-and-coming designers with a platform for their work while raising money for a range of wonderful charities. The theme this year is 'flux', which refers to practices that involve 'breaking with traditional norms and rules, allowing for fluidity in fashion'.

However, for an initiative so clearly concerned with the new, experimental, and transformative, CUCFS' casting seems to have been informed by a very conventional idea of beauty. This year's models are all slim, with strong jawlines and high cheekbones. It is difficult, when scrolling through the line-up, to locate exactly where these 'traditional norms' are being broken.

High fashion's aversion to venerating or even simply representing more than one particular body type is a well-documented subject. For anyone even tangentially following the body positivity movement, it feels like this conversation has been going on forever. So why is it still relevant? Frankly, it's exasperating that CUCFS, which has such

a positive impact in many regards, still adheres to a set of standards that not only enforces damagingly limited ideas of what beauty can be, but also stifles creative potential within the fashion industry itself.

As with many student-led projects in Cambridge, the standard to which the Charity Fashion Show aspires is essentially professional. However, this shouldn't mean that it must also replicate the shortcomings of professional shows.

It is unfortunate that this adherence to convention is allowed to disrupt an opportunity to create something genuinely different. Although the body positivity movement has long since cast a critical eye on the fashion industry, high fashion has been slow to catch up with the changing standards elsewhere. It appears to occupy a distant, disconnected realm, untouched by – and out of touch with – the wider world.

The beauty standards that pertain to high fashion models are vastly different from those we associate with, say, Instagram influencers or sports stars. However, they all shape the ways in which physical attractiveness is coded and calculated in the popular consciousness. It

would be ridiculous to suggest that the ideals promoted by Instagram influencers or sports stars are any more attainable – or any more objectively beautiful – than those of high fashion models, but it is important to recognise that high fashion is a relatively small component of a complex media matrix.

The ideals promoted by high fashion are associated not merely with sexuality, physical prowess, or a particular way of living, but with 'beauty' in its purest form. It rests on the presumption that the human body can be a component of a work of art, held in tension or symbiosis with the clothes that adorn it.

By explicitly or implicitly setting setting parameters for the types of bodies that can be involved in this artistic practice, the practice itself is limited, and these limitations have implications outside of the fashion industry. If we embrace a form of 'body positivity' that does not extend to high fashion, we are accepting that, while all bodies can be desirable, only one particular body type can be art.

To call for a wider range of body types to be represented on the catwalk is not to demand diversity for the sake of diversity. It is not to ask for a situation in

▲ **The Yigal Azrouel Fashion Show** (MICHAEL MANDIBERG)

“Students have a responsibility to challenge the norms set by society”

which one or two 'plus sized' models are included merely to provide a contrast for those with implicitly 'neutral' – i.e. super-thin – body types. It is, emphatically, not to challenge the notion that the body types currently represented in these spheres are beautiful.

Instead, calling for an increased range of body types is to question the social factors that have led high fashion brands to obsessively equate beauty with one particular body fat index, and to force the industry to not only acknowledge its unique power to create norms, but also exercise its unique capability to challenge them. It is to demand diversity for the sake of *beauty*, because, despite the influence of institutions like the fashion industry, most are able to appreciate the aesthetic power of a vast array of body types.

Students have a responsibility to challenge the norms set by society. CUCFS is the perfect opportunity to do this: to simultaneously encourage body positivity and raise money for charity. It can confront assumptions that otherwise go unchallenged. Perhaps next year, the notion of 'fluidity in fashion' can be more thoroughly emphasised.

Opinion

Harassment of female cyclists is symptomatic of the wider sexualisation of female athletes

The sexual harassment experienced by women cyclists, and the sexualisation of female athletes in general, must not be overlooked

Isobel Duxfield

Content Note: This article contains detailed discussion of verbal sexual harassment and cat calling.

“Oi oi love, lift up the skirt!”
“I’d let you ride me too!”
“Helmet wanker!”

This is just a selection of the heckles I have received while riding my bicycle around Cambridge. Unfortunately, after almost a decade of cycling in London, Oxford, and Cambridge, I am accustomed to a regular onslaught of foul (and largely witless) abuse.

I am not alone in my experience: women across Cambridge – and, indeed, the UK – are disproportionately the target of aggressive abuse from drivers, pedestrians, and even fellow cyclists.

This has been exhibited by multiple studies. The 2015 *Near Miss Project* revealed that women were almost twice as likely as men to be abused when cycling. Similarly, research published earlier this year showed drivers were significantly more likely to encroach (pass closer than three feet) on a female cyclist.

However, we have overlooked the ominous sexual harassment that so often accompanies these encounters. This struck me during a recent incident when, cycling back from a night out, a passing driver bellowed: “pedal that pussy!” It was not the outburst itself that alarmed me, nor the feeble attempt at alliteration, but the driver’s conviction that my being on wheels authorised commentary on

my genitalia.

My female peers recount similar experiences. One second year undergraduate at St John’s College said: “I remember being called a ‘whore’ when cycling to class.” Another reflected: “I have lost count of the number of times I have been wolf whistled.”

I do not want to claim that female cyclists are the sole victims of abuse, nor do I claim that men are the only perpetrators. However, women are more often subject to a specifically sexualised provocation, which men appear to be spared.

When I asked male students about their experiences, many recounted being reproached for curb hopping, or skipping traffic lights. None had encountered the sexually explicit aggression my female peers divulged. “Sure, I’ve been yelled at a few times,” said a male postgraduate student at St Edmund’s, “but this has never had sexual overtones.”

Preoccupation with female cyclists’ sexuality is not new. It can actually be traced back to the invention of the modern bicycle in the late 19th century, where there was widespread concern over sexual morality, and it was feared women would use the saddle as a tool for masturbation. Women on bikes were also depicted as an erotic spectacle, with one enterprising author assessing cities by the allure of the women peddling their streets.

The bicycle may have been hailed by civil rights leader Susan B Anthony for

“Doing more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world,” but it has simultaneously been a vehicle for sexualising women.

Many cycling organisations have attempted to stem this abuse, based on the rationale that more bums on seats will normalise the female biker. For example, British Cycling’s ‘Breeze’ project creates opportunities for female cyclists and emboldens their confidence on the road.

However, the past cannot entirely explain the sexually explicit language directed towards female cyclists, particularly in Cambridge which boasts a roughly equal gender ratio of cyclists.

Instead, we must see harassment as symptomatic of a wider, more disturbing sexualisation of the female athlete. Indeed, I have faced similar onslaughts of sexual expletives when out running, most recently from a trio of boys – no more than 15 years old – who proclaimed they would do things to me that I cannot repeat.

Despite huge progress in female sport, sportswomen continue to be defined by their sexuality. We see it in commentary on their physique, such as the Sun’s description of Australian 100 metre hurdler, Michelle Jenneke as “abs-olutely fabulous” and “not shy to show off her body”. It is also apparent in the “sexing up” of Olympic sports like beach volleyball at London 2012.

Here, females wore bikinis while male players dressed in vest tops and knee-length shorts; a scene charmingly

described by (now Prime Minister) Boris Johnson as semi-naked women “glistening like wet otters.”

Such sexualisation is perhaps most apparent in the promotion of women’s “activewear” apparel aimed more at sculpting a sexually appealing feminine figure than providing substantial support for exercise. An example is Gymshark, a brand that promises to “flatter your physique” with its skin-tight clothing. Women become docile eye candy, not energetic athletes.

This is not to say men are not victim to similarly unhealthy advertising. However, men are encouraged to wed sexual appeal with athletic power, whereas women must relinquish one. If clothing brands, tabloids and our Prime Minister are peddling such rhetoric, is it so shocking similar language is being used on the streets?

Faced with the threat of repeated sexual harassment, it’s no surprise women account for just one third of cyclists in the UK.

As a healthy and ecologically sound form of transport, cycling should be available to all. However, as I fend off yet another catcall, it doesn’t feel much like a woman-friendly option. There is no quick fix to this harassment. British Cycling’s efforts are commendable, but are merely a plaster on what is a cultural and historical continuum.

Nonetheless, the next time you cross a woman on a bike, refrain from appraising her arse while you pass.

“Women become docile eye candy, not energetic athletes”

Think twice before casting your vote. There are, after all, two options.

If you are a student with more than one home address, you must consider where your vote would make most impact

Ari Doomasia

It is very likely that you have been reminded to register to vote before 26th November. It is less likely that you have been told that you can register not once, but twice. Students may choose to vote in their home or university constituency, or even opt to send a postal vote to either of their constituencies. The freedom to make this choice is a phenomenon that is unique to students, and the few with two home addresses. Many would argue that this is a great injustice, and that the ability to vote tactically undermines the entire process. Constituency lines are drawn on the basis of population, but if students can move between semi-porous constituency boundaries, these calculations become redundant. Members of the local communities may just feel the value of their own vote diminish.

However, these anxieties are not widely felt in the UK, because the reality looks very different. Students may have more control over the impact of their vote than the vast majority of citizens, but the opportunity is hardly embraced.

Since students at Oxbridge finish term earlier than many other UK universities, most Cambridge students have the luxury of certainty about their location on

12th December – whether this be domestic students in their home constituency, an international student in their country of residence, or students who choose to stay on in Cambridge once term has ended. A recent analysis by David Kernohan, however, shows that the majority of students from other universities will be breaking up on the week itself. He even suggests that the date was the Conservative government’s “tactical masterstroke” to thwart student votes, in a bid to weaken support for the Labour Party.

Regardless of whether or not Kernohan’s verdict is true, it does highlight that the disenfranchisement of young people is a definite political reality, known well by politicians and not enough by young voters. The prevailing perception is that voting is already a low priority for students, and with subtle systematic changes can be made even lower. In an extreme example of this rhetoric, Rod Liddle went as far as to encourage parents to take an active role in disenfranchising their own children, in an article unapologetically titled: *If you do one thing this election, stop your kids from voting.*

For many students across the UK, the upcoming General Election will be the

first in which they are eligible to vote. Even for those who did cast their vote in the last two general elections of the past four years, this may be the most significant. The demand for a stable government has reached new heights, and political pressure could not be more fraught – it is doubtful that the UK could handle another General Election in the next few years. Since these years will see some of the most formative policy changes in the nation’s modern history, and in our lifetimes, this election is one of the rare opportunities we have to decide who exactly drives this change.

Since 2015, the Cambridge seat has been held by the Labour MP Daniel Zeichner, and he was re-elected in 2017. Zeichner’s 2015 win was by a mere 600 votes over his Liberal Democrat opponent. His vote increase surged by almost 16% in 2017, when support for the Labour Party was at a periodic high. It is certainly not a safe seat. For the contested seat in Cambridge, now five parties have named their candidate. The competition looks to be most fierce between the incumbent, Zeichner, and Rod Cantrill, the new Liberal Democrat candidate. Recent polling puts the Liberal Democrats ahead by 39% as of 29th October, and regis-

tered a substantial decrease in support for Labour who have slipped to 30%. Recent history has shown polling to be, at best, unreliable, and at worst it creates a false sense of security, or needless panic. Nevertheless, what should be taken from these ‘predictions’ is just how unpredictable the upcoming General Election is panning out to be. And where there is unpredictability, there is opportunity.

With just a month until election day, there is little guarantee over which candidate will stir up more support. *The Guardian’s* tool may help you to assess where your vote will be most effective. However, since it only uses data from the 2017 election, it is also well worth looking into the results of both your home and university constituency, and comparing electoral trends over recent years. Students can register with both addresses, whether it be for the polling station at home or through the post in Cambridge. Any student who votes exercises both their basic democratic right and their freedom to decide between two possibilities. Democracy may mean that we all get one vote, but students are in a unique position to choose where it goes.

Register to vote by 26th November at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.



40 years of women in most Cambridge colleges, but there's still a long way to go

The discrimination women still face at the University should not be obscured

Bethan McGinley

For many colleges, this year marks the 40th anniversary of women's admission to Cambridge. It's an anniversary that prompts us to reflect on how far we have come as a university, but also how far we still have to go.

The truth is that progress has been slow, hard won, and remains incomplete. Women have actually been present in Cambridge from the start; colleges such as Pembroke and Clare were founded by women and, across the University, women have since occupied domestic roles. However, women weren't awarded degrees until 1947, almost 60 years after Philippa Fawcett topped the Mathematical Tripos, dispelling the myth that women were somehow less capable than men.

In spite of the places we are now afforded, the legacy of exclusion lives on. Perhaps the most recent example of the precarious position of women at the University is the now-reversed decision to readmit Peter Hutchinson, a Trinity Hall fellow accused of sexual assault.

The fact that Hutchinson was initially allowed back is testament to the continued tradition of dismissing women's

voices. What message does allowing an accused sexual predator back into a college full of female undergraduates send? It tells us that one man is more important than all of the women who spoke out against him, and everyone who would be at risk had he been allowed to return.

We therefore must consider how much has actually changed since male undergraduates used a battering ram on the gates of Newnham in 1921 to celebrate their victory over their female peers who were campaigning for degrees. While today women can have degrees, actions like those of Trinity Hall send the same message as those of almost a century ago: women cannot expect to be valued as members of this university on the same terms as men.

This is compounded by a number of deep-rooted inequalities that continue to exist in the background, somewhat unchallenged.

For one, women simply do not do as well as men at Cambridge, with an 8% attainment gap between the number of Firsts achieved by men compared to women. Additionally, the gender pay gap at the staff level highlights the ongoing

struggle for equality here. Men occupy 62.8% of the highest paid jobs across the University, and women earn 86p for every £1 a male earns.

This simply gets bleaker when women of colour are considered. It was only in 1996 that the first BAME female lecturer was given a permanent lectureship at the University. While the precise number of BAME female academics at Cambridge is not available, statistics show that, across the UK in 2017, just 25 Black women were recorded as working as professors out of about 19,000 professors in total. When this is set against the backdrop of Cambridge – in which only 41 out of 552 Cambridge professors surveyed in 2018 were not white and fewer than five were black – we can get a clear picture of how poorly represented BAME female academics are in Cambridge.

Women's place in sports is another aspect of struggle. The first women's Boat Race took place between Newnham and Oxford in 1927; the rowers were judged not just on speed but also on 'style,' and the women weren't allowed to row next to one another, to prevent it becoming overly competitive. While The Boat Race has come a long way since then, it was

▲ **Illustration by Suzanne Lambeek for Varsity**

“*The legacy of exclusion still lives on*”

only in 2015 that women were able to row on the same part of the river as their male counterparts. In both Oxford and Cambridge, women are still members of a distinguished 'Women's Boat Club,' whilst men are members of the 'Boat Club,' and they are treated as such: in 2018, the Cambridge women's rowing team pulled out of an international regatta because they found out they were to be housed in a hostel, while the men's team “were treated to a five-star resort.” In this way, we can see how women have been continually barred from accessing one of Cambridge's most prized traditions.

The place of women at this university has always been under fire. There are still many who question the right of women to have spaces dedicated to their inclusion, such as women's hour in college gyms. While we should celebrate that women were finally admitted to a number of male colleges forty years ago, we should also acknowledge how far we still have to go.

If you are interested in learning more about the history of women in Cambridge, please visit the 'Rising Tide' exhibition, free at the University Library.

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P R O G R A M S

Science

Mindful or mindless?

Sambhavi Sneha Kumar explores scientific research on the 'mindfulness' phenomenon

Content Note: This article contains mention of anxiety, depression and stress

Mindfulness has been widely dubbed as a powerful solution for a wide range of issues, from the pressure of a hectic lifestyle to mental health conditions. The interest surrounding mindfulness has soared exponentially in recent years, both in the general public but also the scientific community.

As it is thought of in clinical terms, mindfulness is an umbrella term covering a range of different practices, but, as defined by the NHS, generally refers to "paying more attention to the present moment". Mindfulness meditation typically involves a breathing practice, awareness of the body and mind, and muscle relaxation. This can help people experiencing depression and anxiety.

Professor Mark Williams, former director of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre, states that it "lets us stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns. Gradually, we can train ourselves to notice when our thoughts are taking over and realise that thoughts are simply 'mental events' that do not have to control us".

This awareness of our emotional symptoms can help us deal with them more effectively. Scientific evidence shows that mindfulness can have temporary and long-lasting effects on certain regions of the brain, perhaps most specifically on the amygdala. The amygdala is a cluster of nervous cell bodies in the central nervous system, specific to complex vertebrates, and plays a primary role in the processing of memory, decision-making and emotional responses such as fear and anxiety.

A 2012 study performed by the Martinos Centre for Biomedical Imaging involved researchers taking fMRI scans of subjects' brains whilst viewing images with varying emotional content (either positive, negative or neutral) before and after an eight-week training course in mindful attention meditation. While there was no significant effect on the control group, the results showed a decrease in right amygdala response. This implies that mindfulness training can improve emotional stability and response to stress, and that these effects can be long term and manifest even when an individual is not actively practising meditation.

The research into the efficacy of mind-



fulness can, however, be dubious. Nicholas van Dam, a clinical psychologist and research fellow at the University of Melbourne, has stated that "there are many areas where mindfulness-based programs seem to be acceptable and promising, but larger-scale randomised, rigorous trials are needed".

It has also been argued that such practices can be overhyped for financial profit: as the market for meditation-based apps and studios becomes increasingly saturated, it is clear to see that whether mindfulness practices are effective or not, they certainly make for lucrative business.

Many of the problems with assessing the efficacy of mindfulness stem from the difficulty in obtaining reliable data. Sample sizes are often small and therefore not representative, and many investigations lack an adequate control group, meaning that the placebo effect cannot be ruled out. A 2015 review published in *American Psychologist* reported that only around 9% of research into mindfulness-based interventions that had been tested in clinical trials had included a control group.

Furthermore, many previous studies have attempted to analyse the effectiveness of meditation methods by using self-rated measure, but these tend to have heavy levels of bias as the subjects

▲ **Mindfulness can reduce stress and improve focus** (PIXABAY)

“Mindfulness can have long-lasting effects on regions of the brain”

are affected by their own self-perception. However, there have been concerted efforts to address this. Researchers from John Hopkins University reviewed almost 19,000 studies on meditation practices to find trials which met their rigorous criteria. Out of the 47 trials which met these standards, they found that such programmes can indeed have positive effects on anxiety, depression and pain.

On top of this, in order to try and quantify the analysis of the effects of mindfulness training, medical imaging techniques may be used. Electroencephalograms (EEGs) can demonstrate objectively that mindfulness practices can have an effect by measuring voltage fluctuations arising due to ionic currents within the neurons of the brain, leading to an assessment of the electrical activity of the brain.

Previous studies have claimed that meditation can be associated with decreased alpha blocking. Alpha waves are neural oscillations with frequency specifically in the range of 8-12Hz, and alpha blocking refers to the disappearance or reduction in amplitude of these waves when an individual is focused on a specific stimulus. This scientifically suggests that mindfulness practices can encourage relaxation.

An alternative imaging strategy is

“Its practices can reduce symptoms such as stress and depression”

functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which uses magnetic properties of blood haemoglobin to detect areas of the brain with increased or decreased metabolic activity. This enables researchers to view the effect of mindfulness training on different regions of the brain, and was used to show changes in amygdala activity in the Martinos' Centre's investigation.

And while conclusions regarding meditation may be muddy, a combination of mindfulness training and an artificial physiological input may provide a way to improve cognitive ability. A study carried out by the University of New Mexico on thirty-four healthy participants revealed that combining mindfulness-based training with non-invasive electrical stimulation of the brain resulted in improvements in working memory capacity, though other abilities tested such as sensation were not affected significantly. Further developments into such fields could have applications in the future.

While some of the research into mindfulness is contested, it can be stated with certainty that its practices can reduce symptoms such as stress and depression, while also improving focus.

Better research with controlled studies into this alternative therapy may go further to support this in the future.

Photography by Phillip Magowan

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Lifestyle

Caffeine kicks *The Vulture* guide to the best coffee in Cambridge

Some of the pioneers of the city's growing specialty coffee scene speak to **Philip Magowan**



▲ Hot Numbers have three spaces where you can enjoy their specialty coffee (PHILIP MAGOWAN)

Having worked in specialty coffee for several years, and now leaving behind a city where I was (perhaps a little too much) familiar with the best places to grab a brew within walking distance, there was one question on my mind when coming to study at Cambridge: where should I go to drink good coffee?

Specialty coffee is a premium product which showcases the result of great attention to detail in growing, grading, roasting, and brewing only the finest cups. Over the past ten or so years, specialty coffee has seen a rapid rise in popularity across the world. In the UK, major cities like London have witnessed a surge in specialty coffee roasteries and cafés.

Many smaller towns and cities are still waiting for specialty coffee to put down roots. However, I have been surprised to find that Cambridge, despite its size, boasts a range of truly remarkable specialty coffee experiences. While this range may not compare to some of the globe's coffee capitals, for a population of over 125,000, the breadth and quality of coffee available here is incredible.

I sat down with some of the pioneers of Cambridge's specialty coffee scene to chat about what they have to offer, and why they think the people of Cambridge love it so much.

Why does Cambridge have so much great coffee?

On my quest to understand the sheer quantity of wonderful coffee experiences in Cambridge, I cycled out to the freshly opened Hot Numbers roastery in Shepreth to meet head roaster Justin, and coffee sourcer, Sophie. Hot Numbers opened in 2011. The name is an homage to an old vinyl store in Cambridge, and the cafés host live jazz events, and at any other given time play it on heavy rotation. As Justin and Sophie show me around the sparkling new roastery, with the equipment

“
Hot Numbers draws its name from an old Cambridge vinyl store
”

from a coffee nerd's dreams nestled on the bar, I ask them about Cambridge's love for great coffee. Justin recounts how Hot Numbers started out initially roasting coffee in a shed in Trumpington and developed into the space

I was busy marvelling at, explaining “when someone trusts their instincts and invests in that passion, it becomes contagious, there's an infectious energy that people get sucked into.” The Hot Numbers passion, stemming from its owner, Simon Fraser, certainly seems

“
The Locker offers a range of coffee from international guest roasters
”

to have invaded Cambridge. Now with three busy cafes spread across the city, their popularity is growing.

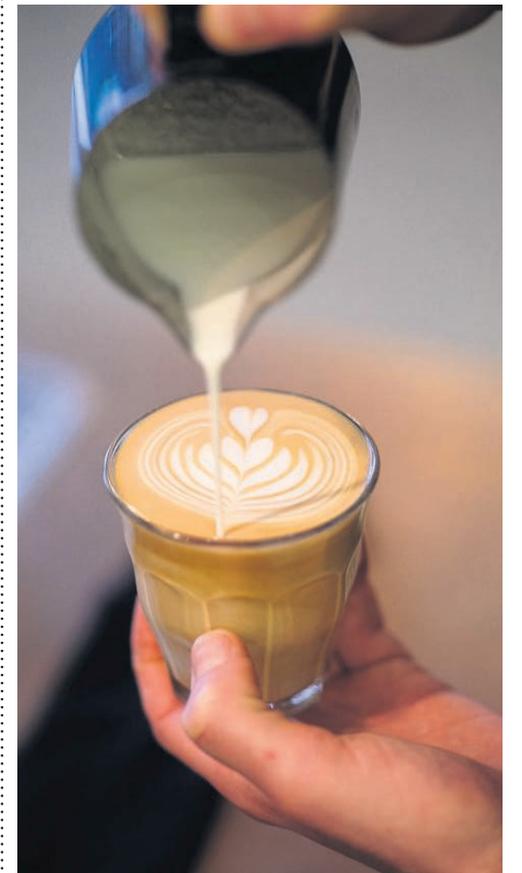
Max and Alex, the founders of Bould Brothers have had a similar experience. I chatted with them in their busy central cafe tucked in behind the Round Church, the mystifying never-ending queue beneath its distinctive striped awning coaxing passersby. For them, it's about providing a unique and memorable experience paralleling the quality of the coffee they serve. Alex explains “for every customer, we hope to provide the equivalent of a 5* hotel experience in what can sometimes be a duration of minutes.” To the guys' credit, after a warm Bould Brothers welcome followed by gazing around at the fun and elegant interior with a great coffee in front of you, you can only accept that this is true. The existence of Hot Numbers, Bould Brothers, and many other specialty-oriented cafés in Cambridge has proven that the population of the town is captivated by artisanal products and the unique experiences they have to offer.

So, where are the best coffee experiences in Cambridge?

Hot Numbers have three spaces where you can enjoy their coffee. Their roastery, situated in Shepreth, offers a large open space great for a day trip on the bike, and a wonderful spot to watch the theatrics of the roasting process as you sip on your brew. They also host events such as pizza nights, so keep your eyes peeled! Alternatively, their more central spots, on Gwydir Street and Trumpington Street, are great places to study, have lunch, and pick up a bag of their coffee for your home/ college brewing needs. Justin assured me that they always have an accessible and fun range of origins available, but both him and Sophie recommended their Finca El Oasis from Columbia.

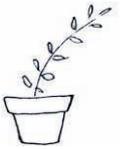
Bould Brothers' café, located beside the

Round Church, is usually very busy. Despite this, quality is always ensured and they offer a classy customer service experience using coffee from some of the best coffee roasteries in the UK. They also have a second site opening in the centre of town very soon, and they made me promise a follow-up article in six months celebrating its success! As they explained their equipment and processes to me, they described their journey as a “constant pursuit of refining and making everything a little bit better.”



▲ If you love coffee a latte, head over to Bould Brothers (INSTAGRAM/BOULDBROTHERSCOFFEE)

The Locker is a cafe dedicated to art in more forms than just coffee! They are the exclusive server of Hot Numbers' 'Brilliant Corners' blend and also offer a range of coffee from international guest roasters such as La Cabra from Denmark. Go and visit, and make sure you get that student discount too! Other local businesses dedicated to serving specialty coffee which come with heavy recommendation are Stir Bakery and Espresso Library. Cambridge is constantly adding to its steadily growing range of coffee experiences. Chat to your baristas. There are some spots off the beaten track, without much of a digital footprint, which they may draw your attention to.



Being mindful of difficult emotions

In her final column on mindfulness, **Charlotte Newman** explains how to approach difficult emotions such as anger and anxiety, accept them, and let them go without judgement

It is inevitable that throughout our lives we must face difficult emotions. At Cambridge, the intensity of term time can exacerbate feelings of anxiety, stress and worry, as well as feelings such as sadness, anger, loss and loneliness.

Through making use of the mindfulness practices I have discussed in this column, we can work to deal with negative emotions.

The first step is becoming aware of what you are feeling and to accept, without judgement, that this feeling is within you. It is important not to try and fight difficult emotions or to push them away, as they can consequently lie within us unresolved. Only through becoming consciously aware of such feelings can we accept them and gradually let them pass. Try to become aware of where in your body you feel the emotion: do you feel tight in your chest, is it in your stomach, your head? Locating the feeling in this way will help you to let go of it. By observing and accepting the emotion we can label and identify it without judgement.

If you feel overwhelmed by difficult emotions, focusing on the breath can ground you in the present moment. The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh encourages us to think of difficult emotions as being like a storm, and that we are a tree. The tree may be battered by the storm, but its roots (which are our mindfulness practice and our inner self) are strong and can keep us from being swept away. The storm, too, will pass, because all things pass. Another way of looking at it is that difficult

emotions are like clouds in the sky: they arise, but then they drift away. They too will pass. By becoming aware of our emotions, and recognising that they are temporary and not a part of who we truly are, we can accept them and not judge ourselves for experiencing them.

The next step is to be gentle to ourselves, through loving kindness and compassion. We give ourselves loving kindness and are gentle to ourselves – we are not critical of ourselves if we have become anxious over a deadline. We accept it, identify the emotion as anxiety, recognise that it is not permanent, and then begin to love ourselves completely. Bringing ourselves back to the present moment can remind us that we have the ability to deal with so much more than we think we can.

Mindfully approaching difficult emotions is not about trying to avoid these emotions, but to meet them and accept them for what they are and, through meditation and loving kindness, to remind ourselves of who we are.

We can bring ourselves out of time-based thoughts by focusing on the breath, which brings us back to our bodies and the present moment. From here we can accept and watch emotions without becoming consumed by them. If you realise through your awareness that you have become consumed – that’s okay. We let go of the judgement and offer ourselves loving kindness.

Another practice for cultivating awareness and allowing us to access the inner peace and

love we all carry inside of us is gratitude. When you are feeling overwhelmed, focus on your breath, how it flows in and out of your body, become aware of the rhythm, and then list five things you are grateful for. It can be as simple as the sun or the rain that day, your friends, the cup of tea you have just made – anything, however small it seems. This will not only bring your awareness back to the present, but it will also cultivate gratitude within you at the amazing reality of being alive in this very moment.

It is a slow process, but each kind word we speak to ourselves and each breath we take that brings us into awareness can help us realise the impermanence of emotions. Good emotions and bad emotions pass; they are not forever.

Through practising mindfulness we are reminded that the only constant is change, and that needn’t be scary; change can be a beautiful thing. In the moment when we feel most overwhelmed, giving ourselves love reminds us that this too will pass, and that we will emerge out of the storm into the sun once again.

I hope this series has been able to offer some useful ideas, concepts and practices that will allow you to find some peace in this hectic world we live in.

Charlotte runs a YouTube channel named TalkingCalm in which she discusses mindfulness.

◀ Illustration by Lisha Zhong for Varsity

Why I violently do not want to ride my bicycle

Walking truly allows you to take in and appreciate your surroundings, says **Izzy Dignum**

Two weeks ago, I rode a bicycle for the first time in ten years, largely for the sake of this column. I was planning to regale you with tales of how I rode into a car, or fell headlong into the Cam, or got myself tangled up with a hawthorn and a herd of cows, but unfortunately none of those things happened. But it wasn’t until I moved from two wheels to two feet that I realised how much I didn’t like cycling.

When I am running or cycling or doing anything over the speed of four miles an hour, my attention switches to my sweaty headphones or my steering wheel or the possibility of being hit by a car. This is not detail. It is stress or panic, and far from my ‘poetic’ ideal of a nature walk. I find it very difficult to hold more than one thing in my brain at once, juggling not with balls or fire sticks (although that is what Cambridge sometimes feels like) but with glimpses of colour and rustles in hedgerows and trying to hold the sensation of being alive. It’s in the sensation of movement,

of one foot in front of the other, seemingly slow progress but at least I have the time to notice things and work things out. Walking gives me the opportunity to engage the conscious part of my brain that lies dormant for too long, that shakes cold into my fingertips

“
Walking shakes cold into
my fingertips and droplets
of rain into my hair
”

and droplets of rain into my hair. Take birds: You cannot hear birdsong over the clattering of bicycle wheels or Spotify’s ‘Fast Pop Run: 180 bpm’ playlist.

An example of Things Noticed, from a night when I needed to leave the bubble, clear my

head, see grass that I could walk on: It wasn’t the most pleasant night to do so (chilly, spitting with rain, a gauze-like night falling rapidly), and everyone I encountered was either running or cycling. Outside, there was an opaqueness collecting which blurred the edges of trees. I noticed many things that evening (a light aircraft that for a split-second I thought was a heron flying at high altitude, what was potentially a wagtail), but the cauldron of bats was transfixing in the best way.

If I had been cycling, I would not have been looking at the sky. Maybe now (or dawn, or dusk) is the time to look up, look out, shift your perspective, be that traversing the world on two feet or two wheels. In her poem ‘Of Mutability’, Jo Shapcott writes “Look up to catch eclipses, gold leaf, comets, / angels, chandeliers, out of the corner of your eye”. Although these caught glimpses are fleeting, momentary, a snatched blackbird song or sweeping bat wing arc, memories last far longer.



▲ From two wheels to two feet (LOUIS ASHWORTH)

Arts

Inspired by the East is a cultural crime

From its misuse of Said's concept of Orientalism to its reinforcement of harmful stereotypes, this British Museum exhibition is almost laughable, writes **Alycia Gaunt**

Entering the dimly lit space of *Inspired by the East: How the Islamic World Influenced Western Art* from the British Museum's milk-white Great Court is a jarring experience. According to the *Guardian*, the museum's newest exhibition aims to highlight "the mutual fascination and inspiration of the two worlds" it explores, East and West, which have been in dialogue since the 15th century. Whether it actually achieves that is a different matter.

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The British Museum's own role in our colonial story is hardly problematised

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Even before you consider the social and historical myopia on show here, the exhibition suffers from periodisation, an issue not made sufficiently explicit in the show's titling. In the exhibition's chronology, which begins in the 15th century, a wealth of rich source material is missing. The most significant omission is arguably the show's ignorance of Venice.

Once described as early modern Europe's "gateway to the East", Venice's geographical situation as a trading nexus and its cross-fertilisation with non-Western architectural design render it ideal terrain for consideration. Take, for example, the ogival arches of the façade of St. Mark's Basilica, and the Fondaco, a residence welcoming travelling merchants which takes its name directly from the Arabic *funduq*.

If ever there were a complex and mutually enriching cross-continental engagement, it was here. Instead, we are presented with poor Western imitations of 17th-century Ottoman Iznik plates, illustrating less a benign interplay of cultures than an uncomfortable fetishisation of otherness.

Parts of this show, particularly its language, are almost laughable given the ongoing Western incursion in the East (Trump's annexation of Syrian oilfields being only the most recent, cynical, and illegal exemplar). The British Museum's own role in our colonial story is hardly problematised here. Divided into chapters that include the headings "Reorient" and "Disorient", glittery gold placards caption the works while orientalist connotations diffuse. The outcome is a dangerous (and embarrassingly kitsch) aestheticisation of an entirely lopsided cultural exchange. The only thing missing is incense.

An early reference to the work of Edward Said has been included at best cursorily, at worst ignorantly. Said's assertion of a pervasive Western tradition (both academic and artistic) of prejudiced outsider-interpretations



▲ "Entering *Inspired by the East* from the British Museum's milk-white Great Court is a jarring experience" (FLICKR/GABRIEL RODRIGUEZ)

of the Eastern world is based fundamentally on historical analysis, a feature that is virtually absent in *Inspired by the East*. Historical fact is wilfully obscured. An 1854 portrait by William Brockedon presents the Venetian Giovanni Battista Belzoni – a circus strongman-turned-plunderer par excellence – as an irreproachable archaeologist and explorer bedecked in Eastern garb. Mention is made of his removal of the colossal bust of Rameses II, shipped directly to the British Museum in 1815, but there is no acknowledgement of how this portrait of proactive automythology is a direct product of colonial plunder and violence.

Co-curator Olivia Threlkeld's proposition that "Orientalism was one of the defining elements of the 19th and 20th centuries, comparable to other 'isms' like Surrealism and Impressionism" highlights the misuse of Said's theory in this exhibition. The suggestion that we can peacefully absorb Orientalism into the canon of art history, detaching it from its historical and contemporary context, is a textbook act of neo-colonialism.

However, a lack of critical analysis (or even recognition) of history is not the only omission here. The harem, a defining leitmotif of Orientalism, is practically disregarded. This may be partly explained by the museum's collaboration with the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (where the exhibition will be shown in June of next year); unbounded imagery of Sapphic women in various states of undress is probably inappropriate given the context.

Some suitable images are included: 'Algerian Interior (detail)' by Delacroix offers a superficial glance into a 19th-century French obsession with the 'feminine exotic'. Yet the heavy curatorial editing in this area leaves a bitter aftertaste.

“

This exhibition is more of the same imperialistic whitewashing

”

The last section introduces four contemporary female Muslim artists. This feels like an afterthought, reinforcing the stereotype of a passive East, and demonstrates gender's marginalisation in this show. *Harem*, the 2009 film by Turkish visual artist Inci Eviner, is based on the 19th-century engravings of German Antoine Ignace Melling and successfully portrays an alternative image of women as active subjects. Unfortunately, in the context of the rest of this show, its inclusion feels more like an exception that proves the rule.

Context is crucial to exhibitions like these. Emily Duthie's article, 'The British Museum: An imperial museum in a post-imperial world' is a reminder of the museum's uneasy position as a custodian of world heritage. Despite

its claims of redefinition, Duthie illustrates how the museum's responses to calls for repatriation demonstrate a continuity with its past imperial role. Earlier this year, Geoffrey Robertson QC, a leading human rights lawyer, described the British Museum as the "world's largest receiver of stolen goods".

More sinister is its sponsorship. Standard Chartered, a British multinational banking and financial services company, has its own roots in colonial history. Before it merged with the South African Standard Bank in 1969, it was Chartered Bank, which was founded in 1853. Influential in the growth of colonial trade through the East of Suez, its initial specialism was in the discounting and re-discounting of opium and cotton bills.

Given the history of the British in China, and the context of two Opium Wars, it is inconceivable that a bank born from said profits would invest in an unwanted critique of this period.

At the very least, *Inspired by the East* presents ignorance of history and current affairs. One senses that the curators believe they have made something successfully provocative. In reality, its overwhelming message is the tired trope of #NotAllColonialists — more of the same imperialistic whitewashing.

This is a shame, as there was room here for productive debate. Unfortunately, instead of refashioning itself as a crucible of cultural self-criticism, the museum has allowed its curators to perpetuate pastiche and power.



Citrus connections at Kettle's Yard

Damian Walsh considers the Kettle's Yard lemon and the gallery's sense of home

In a large pewter bowl in the corner of the room sits a lemon, under two dark sea paintings. It looks as if someone's left it there absent-mindedly, to come back and pick up again later. A zesty drop of yellow amid a particularly monochrome corner of the house, it draws your eye, as so many things in this eclectic gallery do.

The gallery in question is the sprawling yet homely Kettle's Yard, Cambridge's much-loved modern art collection. The house itself evades description; bought by Jim and Helen Ede as four dilapidated cottages in 1956 and opened up to students soon after (then expanded several times, most recently in 2015-18), it was the Edes' home until 1973. It still feels far more like a home than a traditional gallery. Every day during term time, Jim Ede would offer guided tours for any student who dropped by for his 'open afternoons'.

Jim Ede described Kettle's Yard not as an art gallery or a museum, but 'a continuing way of life' where 'stray objects, stones, glass, pictures, sculpture, in light and in space may manifest the underlying stability' – a rare quality in Cambridge. The lemon seems to me like an unassuming symbol for the whole gallery. (And, seeing as you can buy a lemon brooch in the gift shop too, I think the curators agree!) Placed there by Ede originally to complement the yellow spot in Joan Miró's abstract 'Tic Tic' hanging nearby, it's part of a web of connections knitting the whole house together.

Miró's surreal, jumbled painting is difficult to understand. Ede saw it mainly as an "opportunity to show undergraduates the importance of balance.

"If I put my finger over a spot at the top right", he explains in *A Way of Life*, "all the rest of the picture slid into the left-hand bottom corner". Taking out the middle makes everything fly "to the edges". The painting is much like Kettle's Yard itself: removing one item

would be like losing a link in the chain.

As you walk around the house, you start to feel that everything, like the lemon, is placed deliberately. A woman on my tour notices three sea shells scattered on the downstairs mantelpiece. "You'll often," the guide agrees, "find things here in threes."

In this web of connections that spreads across the whole house, you, the visitor, are the missing piece. Chairs are freely scattered around the house, and you're encouraged to sit in them and take in the art from a different angle. If you needed more prompting, paintings are arranged in unexpected places: one picture of flowers is at ankle height, impossible to study unless you find the nearby chair and relax.

There are no labels in Kettle's Yard. Besides matching my own, vague, hippyish distaste for 'labels', this lack of description also disrupts the sombre distinctions that often hang over galleries: dividing 'art' from 'non-art'. The pebbles, the feathers, the flowers that adorn the house every spring take on just as much significance as the works of 'art' themselves. "Stones are strange expressions of miracles," wrote Ede. He artfully arranged 76 of them in a spiral on his bedroom table to demonstrate his claim.

Visiting Kettle's Yard raises more questions than it answers: that's part of the fun. It can also feel spiritual, like finishing a pilgrimage. The careful arrangement of the house is an invitation (as Blake's familiar quote goes) to 'see a world in a grain of sand'. I could add, 'or in a pebble, or a table...' This doesn't have to be confined to the gallery: noticing connections between small, artful things might spread out into all the apparently ordinary objects you see that day.

After all, when life gives you lemons...

▼ GEOGRAPH/DAVID HALLAM-JONES



Floating Embers

In this poem, **Matilda O'Callaghan** finds healing and inner energy in the freedom of sea swimming

And finally gliding across the flat expanse
the heat inside me has learnt to glow
starting as a small ember of hope
in all the pain and sorrow.
This vast space given it a place to grow
for letting the icy cold in meant it could start
to spread so far within,
giving life back to my aching limbs,
the energy to dance so free
for only the sea creatures to see,
to twist and turn among these forests,
wandering in places seaweed calls home.
The heat never reaches my head nor toes
yet the grey endless expanse
asks me to let go;
to stroke to tumble to flow
in rhythmic movements, bubbles blown.
There are no paths to follow now;
the grass here is never mown.
Truly: the freedom to go anywhere.
Diving under is to
soar upwards, and float,
this salty blanket all the comfort I need
so even when I'm in a shivering state
all I need to do is lift my head
and the fire in me will begin to spread.

◀ Illustration by Linda Yu for Varsity

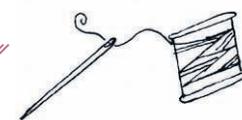
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Fashion



It's okay to be extra

Roll with the punches and wear what you want, says Fashion Editor **Gabriel Humphreys**

“Your outfit’s so extra.” When I first heard the word a few years ago, I frankly had no idea what it meant. Still, I gave a chuckle that the social pressure of the situation demanded, with (I hope) only a hint of strained awkwardness. After talking to friends and doing some Urban Dictionary research, I was shocked and even rather offended that the joking had really been at my expense. It was at best a backhanded compliment, and I had a distinct jolt of panic — was the way I was dressing too much?

“
So I threw my head back,
gave my brightest,
loudest cackle, and carried
on down the road
”

I’m a pretty image-conscious, and at times image-paranoid person, and I doubt anyone who knows me would describe my dress sense as anything other than distinctive or eccentric. I wear clothes that aren’t originally intended for my gender, and I make pretty bold choices far beyond that — bright colours and what would normally be called statement pieces are pretty much my everyday attire. Developing my style, it didn’t necessarily feel like an expression of my identity — these were just the clothes that made me like what I looked like, and that made me, in a very basic sense, happy.

But while my concern for my presentation to the world prior to this comment had at times been fairly consuming, I had somehow come to assume I looked acceptable as long as I put some effort in. I certainly wasn’t dressing for other people:

“
The way I choose to dress is
not an invitation for your
critique or commentary
”

I felt comfortable in what I was wearing, and never paid much attention to whether or not it could be perceived as too much. But now, I felt a sudden, crushing weight of judgement. The condemnation of the overdone, of the over-the-top, has become just as savage and censorious as our disdainful view of those we perceive as lacking in care for their own self-image.

By all means, make an effort, but don’t go too far. You can wear make-up, but not too



▲ “You can never be over dressed or overeducated”, wrote Oscar Wilde (YOUTUBE/DOLCE & GABBANA)

much. Wear bright colours, but not too much. God forbid you look gaudy, or stand out from everyone else.

I can hardly blame people for being visually critical. Like no other time in history we are surrounded and bombarded by images that demand our attention and judgement — in marketing, on social media, on the small and big screens. With decreasing attention spans and ever competitive markets, there is even more emphasis on immediate recognition and quick consumption. We base entire opinions, and even actions on the purely aesthetic — judgements are lightning fast and surface level, to the point of intense shallowness.

I’m hardly guiltless myself — I can’t possibly claim I’ve never judged what someone looks like, but I recognise that how they present themselves is entirely their choice, and they don’t owe an explanation or a reason to me or anyone else about why they dress the way they do. In spite of attitudes towards non-conventional dressing seemingly coming on leaps and bounds, with celebrities choosing to break convention at major events now a common occurrence, it’s not always that simple. I’ve heard people openly discussing my gender in a

language they presumed I couldn’t understand. I’ve heard people openly laughing at me in public places because of the way I dressed. Occurrences like these have sometimes made me

“
The condemnation of the
over-the-top has become
savage and censorious
”

feel a horrifying pressure to fit into a normative model of dressing that would make those around me and, ironically, possibly myself for a short time, more comfortable.

But, whether you know it or not, everything you wear is choice — an expression of your thoughts, feelings or identity. And those are things that shouldn’t be, and can’t be, repressed for the sake of those around you and at the cost of your own happiness. Choosing to conform, or not. Choosing to stand out, or not. We make choices and forge an identity with our clothes every time we leave the house. So maybe I do want to stick out like a sore

extra. *adjective, slang*
too extreme and not suitable;
making too much effort, or
demanding too much effort
and attention
(Cambridge English Dictionary)

thumb? Maybe I want to wear a bright yellow jumper that makes me look like the love-child of a Muppet and a traffic cone. What’s it to you? The way I choose to dress, no matter how ‘flamboyant’, is not an invitation for your critique or commentary.

Oscar Wilde said, “You can never be over-dressed or overeducated”, so I propose we reclaim the overdressed: in spite of how you might be judged, there is no better revenge than carrying on regardless. A delightful man recently leant out of a van window, looked me dead in the eye, and said one single word: “Disgusting”. Something that might once have crushed me to my very core seemed to have lost all its power. I threw my head back, gave my brightest, loudest cackle, and carried on down the road, boots clacking on the cobbles and red beret artfully askew.



More reviews are available online at:
varsity.co.uk/theatre

Theatre

Becoming Electra, a homecoming kween

Electra Cute, the drag queen born in Cambridge University, is back, writes **Guy Woolf**

Cambridge, I'm coming home! I started performing as Electra when I was at Cambridge with my drag sisters DENIM taking over the Union and turning the historical room full of hot air into a room full of hot air and sweatpants. DENIM was the first drag night ever at Cambridge, started by queer icon and my drag mother, Glamrou (Amrou Al Kadhi, whose recent book Unicorn has been published to rave reviews).

DENIM went on to perform at the Soho Theatre, Hyde Park, across Europe, a set at Glastonbury with Florence and the Machine, and a particular highlight performing at the Chiltern Firehouse, Marylebone, where Kate Moss left the glowing review "I think they're called Denim". This is, however, Electra's first time going solo. That's right, she is the Beyoncé, the Zayn Malik or the Camilla Cabello of DENIM.

At Cambridge I was president of CUMTS and spent more time on the stage and in the bar of the ADC than in any lecture or supervision. It is so exciting to be coming back home with this amazing show, written by Isla van Tricht and directed by Tash Hyman.

Electra is not a girl, not yet a woman, star-



▲ Electra, photographed by Harry Elletson
 (WWW.ISLAVANTRICHT.COM/CURRENT-PROJECTS)

ing down the barrel of who she's going to be, on the eve of her 18th birthday party, trying to discover unity within herself when the different facets of her identity feel so at odds. Through songs and flashbacks, Electra wrestles with this question; can she tell her queer friends she's Jewish and her Jewish friends she's queer? You're invited to her party to find out.

Glamrou always taught me that drag is a great way to trojan your politics into a fun and accessible (our aim was always to make DENIM the Disney of the drag world) format. Performing as Electra allows me to be visible as Jewish and to say what I feel about antisemitism and the complexities of identity through the disarming language of comedy, song and drag. In many ways Electra empowers me and educates me to be a better person, more aware of other minority experiences. And in another way she is like therapy because any bad stuff that happens to me can be passed on to her to deal with and wrestle through.

Personally, I have grappled with my identity for many years. In a world of polarisation – Left/Right, leave/remain, like/dislike, Britney/Christina – we are pulled in so many differ-

ent directions and forced to choose binaries and pick sides. My personal experiences of discrimination and racially-motivated abuse – being punched, spat on and called "kike" – made me realise that there was a real need to be a visible and proud Jew in a time of rising antisemitism from the Left and Right wings of politics.

So I approached the supremely talented Isla van Tricht (playwright and lyricist whose work has been performed in London, Edinburgh and off-Broadway) to write a one-person show in which Electra could explore these ideas with more time and space, with story, humour, and music.

The work was programmed by JW3 (London's Jewish Cultural Centre) for one night before a three-night sell-out run at the Other Palace. Off the back of those performances, Becoming Electra is heading out on the road touring venues across the UK.

And she can't wait to come back for one night only to the place where it all began! Come and welcome Electra Cute home; listen to uplifting, heart-warming, and raucously funny storytelling alongside pop, musical theatre classics and the odd original sung by the kween herself.



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Music



Teenagers run the music industry

Through meme culture, viral videos and TikTok, the Internet has given rise to unparalleled innovation from the most consistently overlooked communities, writes **Kwaku Gyasi**

The music business has always had to constantly work around new forms of media and technology to sustain itself. This has been very evident in the past few decades, as the rise of piracy, iTunes and streaming in rapid succession have completely upended the industry, not only changing the kind of music that artists make, but how consumers engage with it. As with any technologically-driven field, millennial and Generation Z digital natives, who have always had to work the hardest to prove and promote themselves, have been able to bring about real change — and make real money — that even bigwigs at major record labels have tried to study and replicate. It is clear that the Internet has given rise to unparalleled innovation from the most consistently overlooked communities in various forms of entertainment, and the parallel phenomenon in music is seeing black teenage rappers game a system made to lock them out and deny their position as tastemakers.

“
The unsupervised children
who run TikTok are
rarely taken seriously
”

Artists and labels have been aware of how great a role the Internet has played in promotion for a while now. Internet dance challenges have launched many songs to the top of the charts and added a lot of names to the never-ending list of one-hit wonders — artists like Baauer, whose 2012 single ‘Harlem Shake’ spent a month at #1 because of people’s inexplicable desire to record themselves convulsing off beat while dressed in elaborate costumes.

But the purchasing power of young people has only been deliberately harnessed by a select few musicians with their ear to the ground, who understood exactly how to use virality to capture adolescent attention, and the first to do this was arguably Soulja Boy. In a bid to become the first viral rapper at the age of 17, Soulja pushed his debut single ‘Crank That (Soulja Boy)’ relentlessly, taking advantage of its accompanying dance craze and popularity on the then-budding YouTube. The song went on to reign atop the Billboard Hot 100 for seven weeks, earn a Grammy Nomination for Best Rap Song and reportedly sell 15 million ringtones, in an era when that was a legitimate metric of a song’s success. While many of his predecessors in the genre decried the song as an omen of the “death of hip-hop”, he had successfully tapped into a market that had long been ignored, and one that he was still a part of: children and teenagers.

But there is a reason why his ability to maintain a relatively successful career for a few years, especially as a previously unknown Georgia teenager who made his beats on Fruity Loops, is not just because his fanbase was over-

whelmingly made up of minors. His thick accent and crisp, clean production was part of a wave of hip-hop that was then, and is now, heavily ridiculed: mid-2000s Southern rap. A sector of the audience that propelled ‘Crank That’ to the top of the charts likely made fun of his slurring Southern accent even while unable to resist the distinctive steel pan instrumental.

We’ve seen this ‘ironic’ appreciation applied to the flurry of dance crazes which entered the mainstream during or after the golden age of Vine three to five years ago. These dances tended to spring from Black American communities, and like ‘Crank That’, a fresh-faced teenage rapper would make a danceable song with instructional lyrics, and cute home videos of children performing the song would follow. As is natural, celebrities pick up on these trends, we get bored of them, and they travel through layers of mockery and irony until they end up known as Fortnite dances, associated with affluent pre-adolescent boys and torn from their originators.

But the youth of today understand how to exploit the semi-ironic, non-committal attitudes common on the Internet. This is most easily exemplified by 20-year-old rapper Lil Nas X, who in the span of a year turned himself from a tweetdecker into a global sensation. Known previously under the alias @NasMaraj, he would make viral tweets which reached hundreds of thousands of followers, drawing attention to his SoundCloud in the replies.

When he released ‘Old Town Road’ at the end of 2018, he would edit together meme videos of characters like Shrek dancing to the song, and joke with his growing fanbase about getting Billy Ray Cyrus to feature on the song (which inexplicably did actually happen). The trend of performing to the song with the caption #yeehaw spread like wildfire on the app TikTok, well before Lil Nas X had even become a recognisable name. The unsupervised children who run TikTok are rarely taken seriously (as comedians or even as genuine tastemakers). Lil Nas X said, in an interview with *Time* magazine, “a lot of people will try to downplay it, but I saw it as something bigger.” The strength of suburban teens’ semi-ironic enjoyment of the song was powerful enough to make ‘Old Town Road’ unavoidable for the greater part of 2019, going as far as to break an all-time Hot 100 record for weeks at #1.

Lil Nas X, however, is far from the first artist to harness



▲ Lil Nas X repeatedly joked online about getting Billy Ray Cyrus to feature on the song (YOUTUBE/LILNASX)

meme culture to get his music out there, he just managed to whittle it down to a science. Ever aware of his evolution in the public eye from hip-hop’s crybaby to the preeminent rap artist of this generation, Drake rode the memes from the ‘Hotline Bling’ and ‘In My Feelings’ music videos all the way to the bank. Mariah Carey’s 2008 diss track ‘Obsessed’ started to climb back up the charts this summer, all because TikTok user @reesehardy7 posted a video of herself crying and dancing to it, triggering the creation of the #ObsessedChallenge. ‘Roman Holiday’, the haywire opening track from Nicki Minaj’s second studio album, experienced its biggest streaming week ever seven years after its release after Twitter stans breathed new life into it with bizarre edits. We live in a world where if enough lonely kids in a social media group chat find something funny or awkward or even embarrassing, livelihoods can be impacted.

That being said, TikTok and Twitter can also help to breathe life into songs that are seen as more than trends or fads. Mariah Carey specifically experiences this repeated surge of interest in her music every winter. In January 2019, her holiday classic ‘All I Want for Christmas is You’ cracked the top 3 of the US all-genre chart, reaching an all-time peak, and there is every chance that it could top the chart again this Christmas, twenty-five years after its debut, off of the strength of streams.

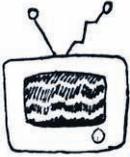
The impact of streaming is impossible to ignore: it has essentially upended what it is that popular music charts actually measure. Previously, with pure single and album sales, the only way for us to track a song’s popularity would be to see how many people buy it every week. But streaming has made music

available to more people than ever before — especially young people and hip-hop fans, two groups which had been historically misrepresented by the charts — and tracks listening patterns as opposed to purchasing patterns. Minaj, advocating for streams to count towards album sales in 2015, commented on the implicit exclusion of hip-hop consumers by overlooking the impact of streaming, noting that “the music business doesn’t really seem designed to reward our culture with the sales and accolades we deserve.”

“
It’s inspiring to see the
Internet work its magic on
the music business
”

Now, egalitarian might not be the word to describe this newfound inclusion, as artists have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that waning music sales have robbed many musicians of the possibility of making much profit from their work. That being said, streaming, as well as the rise of the internet as a tool used both to create and share music, has had the unintended effect of making the music industry more accessible.

Overall, it is inspiring to see the Internet work its magic on the music business. It means a lot that younger and younger artists see Lil Nas X or Billie Eilish in control of their careers, or recognise Mariah Carey as the legendary vocalist and songwriter she is, as well as being the Queen of Christmas. It is important that we acknowledge the innovation that so many young artists have pursued in trying to engage the public. Anyone who wants to impact culture has to understand how the most marginalised continue to work around their circumstances to make spaces that shut them out finally pay attention to them, because that’s how we open ourselves up to the best that artists have to offer.



Film & TV

How film got me into philosophy

Film and TV give fascinating insights into our ethical selves, argues **Jay Chiswick**

If you've ever sat in an ethics class, you've probably heard of the 'trolley problem', among other ethical scenarios that will probably (and hopefully!) never happen in real life. Sometimes these scenarios can be frustrating, because they're often deliberately far removed from reality, perpetuating the stereotype that philosophy is just useless abstractions and posing like 'The Thinker' in an armchair. But in the fictional realm of film, you're regularly immersed in these sorts of far-fetched events, often prompting discussion of philosophy and ethics, both intentionally and by chance.

The first time I consciously made a connection between film and philosophy was a few years ago, when I was rewatching *The Walking Dead*. (Spoilers to come!) One particular episode stood out to me. In this episode, an infection is spreading in the prison where the main group of characters are staying, and one character, Carol, kills two infected members of the group in order to prevent the spread of the disease. Having briefly covered utilitarianism at school, I realised that the choice Carol made was a simple utilitarian calculation: she sacrificed Karen and David for the greater good, with the goal of maintaining the rest of the group's health.

As I dived deeper into philosophy, I realised that there's much more to consider than just a broad consequentialist approach. If killing Karen and David was the right thing to do, who (if anyone) held the legitimate authority to make that decision? Is it our moral duty to preserve life at all costs?

Obviously, few people talk about the role of philosophy in films as explicitly as I've done here. But whenever you and your mates disagree about what a character 'should' or 'shouldn't' have done, or you're shocked at a character's corrupt intentions, you're revealing something important about your own normative ethical views. Film and TV has the power to spark ethical discussion under the guise of a simple chat about the latest episode of *Fleabag*.

Film and TV is an accessible way for everybody to engage with philosophy

As well as providing prompts for viewers to consider ethical conundrums, the highly immersive nature of Film and TV is hugely significant in terms of its power to push us to



▲ Illustration by Yuxin Li for Varsity

consider our own ethics. Philosophers are fans of creating fictional scenarios using terminology like 'person A', 'person B' and 'action X'. The use of such language makes these conundrums pervasively impersonal, running the risk of leaving people somewhat desensitised to the gravity of the situations they're discussing. In films, however, a rich backstory, combined with strongly developed characters, can really stress the human element of ethics, something which is occasionally lacking in philosophical discussions.

Film immerses you in ethical events that rarely happen in real life

Such scenarios are also frequently explored in the NBC fantasy show *The Good Place*. Michael creates an "almost impossibly life-like simulation" of the 'trolley problem', and forces Chidi, a professor of ethics and moral philosophy, to take part. As a Kantian, Chidi theoretically should not pull the lever, because to do so would be to violate the Categorical Imperative, a moral law that is unconditional and does not depend on any ulterior motive or end. However, Chidi actually does choose to switch the tracks, revealing how being in some way immersed in a situation (rather than just reading about it in abstract terms) can uncover important truths about our own innate ethical biases.

From medical ethics in *House MD* to questions about identity in *Being John Malkovich*, Film and TV is an accessible and vital way for everybody to engage with philosophy, whether or not they have any philosophical background or education.

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Violet

By VARSITY

Week Five Blues who?

Henry Weighill on avoiding the 'Week Five Blues' through stand-up comedy, makeshift cocktail bars and ABBA

Q

I'm trying to keep my relationship with my long-distance boyfriend strong: do you have any tips?

A

Long-distance relationships can be difficult, so it's important to have the right mindset. The key in any relationship is communication: work and other commitments can easily overwhelm you, so setting aside a time to text or FaceTime regularly means you won't feel yourself drifting apart. Update each other on what's new in your life, even the little things. It's important to be open about any anxieties or insecurities that you may have: being honest is part of any healthy relationship and you should try and nip small worries in the bud.

Having something to look forward to also helps — plan trips to see each other in advance, or go to events such as concerts to see artists that you both love. Although you can't physically see each other often, perhaps take something up together — watch the same series or read the same book. This helps give you the shared experiences that you might otherwise miss out on.

Finally, take time to remind yourself why you're together; this can make the distance a little easier to bear. Time apart will make the moments you spend together even better and will ensure that you don't take each other for granted. After all, distance makes the heart grow fonder!



Got questions?
Get in touch at
violet@varsity.co.uk

Like all Cambridge institutions – CUSU, the Footlights, Mainsbury's – Week Five is an icon in its own right. Supervisors are sometimes instructed to give out less work during the seven-day struggle (something they often eagerly make up for in Week Six). But is Week Five truly deserving of the academy award for worst week on record?

My Week Five began with trying out a new hobby on a group of poor, unsuspecting victims: I went all the way to Fitz to lose my stand-up comedy virginity, a metaphor that anyone who was unfortunate enough to see my five minutes of terror will understand. I got a few nervous giggles, but some people were definitely avoiding eye contact by the end of the night. Maybe I was too intimidatingly funny, but more likely my continued jokes about my reproductive organs made them want to impose a restraining order.

My Saturday was spent struggling with an essay on a philosopher I could barely read in English, never mind his native German. Turns out eight years of studying a language still can't compete with Google Translate. The essay and I met again on the following Monday, where it gave me a savage paper

cut while my professor attempted to explain that I perhaps wasn't suited to Philosophy.

That night was passed at college bop, where my attempts at dancing ended with me on the floor and ABBA stuck in my head for the rest of term. The bop, being an alleged bonding opportunity between St. John's and our Oxford sister college Balliol, allowed me to truly answer the question of where I would rather be. The answer is at home in Hull, far away from either cursed place.

And, in all honesty, I'm worried about the lack of work I have done this week. Indeed, I spent Sunday night in charge of my friend's makeshift cocktail bar on a one-man mission to poison everyone through a self-created recipe for the perfect rhubarb and custard cocktail. Turns out there is no such thing as the perfect rhubarb and custard cocktail, because all variations taste like Calpol. Back to the drawing board we go.

But all in all, Week Five has been bad, but not catastrophic. The acting was ok, dialogue terrible (I have personally run out of interesting conversation starters) and the cinematography was blighted by the fact it kept getting dark at 3.30pm.

7/10 stars. Wouldn't see it again.

“
Is Week
Five truly
deserving
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academy
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”

Adventures in adulting: how (not) to be a grown up

Anastasia Dalchanina attempts to adjust to the trials and tribulations of adult life

Someone who believed that dunking her freshly painted nails into cold tap water would make them dry faster is definitely not someone who should be allowed to live alone, but here we are. Coming to university meant escaping my mother's incessant nagging to tidy my room, breaking my unreasonable 10pm curfew and, more generally, having to be an adult.

In more ideal circumstances, adulting would not mean having to share a bathroom and kitchen with up to ten other people, judging you for cooking up the same sorry-looking pasta for the fifth day in a row. However, student accommodation usually does not afford us this luxury.

I was forced to work off my poorly cooked student meals by trudging downstairs to a toilet that was essentially a cupboard. I had to go even further for a bathroom that actually possessed a sink — hygienic. I have also struggled with the freedom that comes with 'adulting', which mostly means the freedom to make some really poor life decisions. During a routine breakdown,

I spontaneously decided to dye my hair pink, not realising this would tinge the shower with a rosy hue. You live and you learn.

But the bane of my existence is college fire doors. Why do the doors in student accommodation lock as soon as they close? It's like they're waiting to catch me out. The college porters now know me by name, from the sheer amount of times I have sheepishly slithered into the plodge to ask for a spare key. One particularly unlucky day I managed to lock the spare key in my room and the porters caught a glimpse of the swamp I call my home in the process of saving me.

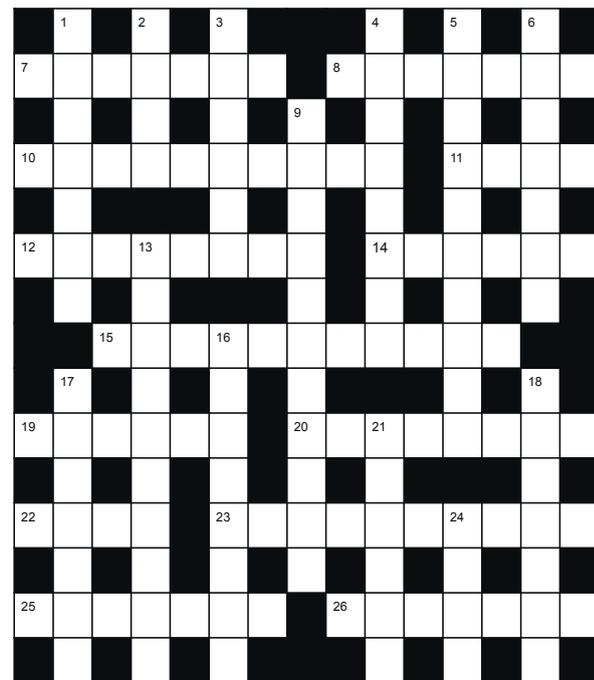
An even more ridiculous account of my ineptitude would be my attempts at laundry. So far they have given me a new set of pastel clothing and shrunk a brand-new sweater from a crop top to what can only be described as a bra.

So whether you're cooking yourself three meals a day or (literally) crying over spilt milk, just know that most of us are just trying not to have a mild heart attack every time the fire alarm is tested. And most of us are failing.

“
Most of us
are just
trying not
to have a
mild heart
attack every
time the fire
alarm is
tested
”

Cryptic Crossword #5

by Pitt*



ACROSS

- 7 One who cuddles or muddles? (7)
8 Bore idiot at University with large expanse of water (7)
10 We heroines managed former President (10)
11 Listen to initially harmonic organ (4)
12/20 I, Vulcan, alongside crumbling college (8, 3, 5)
14 Record made by bachelor? (6)
15 Macron says "Cheers for breakfast item" (6, 5)
19 Retain obscure bit of eye (6)
20 See 12
22 Animal swaps crusts of bread (4)
23 Mock twenty nuts and replace king with son — but that's only an opinion of mine (2, 3, 5)
25 Before work, regularly deem loo free of nits (7)
26 Stalk Florida cat (7)

DOWN

- 1 No speech impediment, ultimately mute, backfired for Greek character (7)
2 Catholic dad with energy (4)
3 Rent centre of whale? Deadly! (6)
4 Er, posses ruined coffee (8)
5 Aha, auntie's running assisted suicide (10)
6 Member with friend, as allowed by law (7)
9 Darlings' small little expression of creativity (11)
13 Red nearly done with factory charge (10)
16 Narrow escape within reach of girl (4, 4)
17 Buff pick in Scottish river (7)
18 Fair play only for American immigration authority (7)
21 Cheats face to face before the French draw (6)
24 Mayhem usually contains birds (4)

Find the answers online at varsity.co.uk!

*Pitt is a pseudonym

Late lapse sees Cambridge men succumb 2-1 to Oxford in tense football face off

Joseph Powell
Sports Reporter

The Light Blues made up for a first half firmly under the cosh with a commanding second half display, which saw them in the ascendancy on Wednesday, looking by far the most likely of the two teams to take home all three points, let alone one.

However, a lapse in concentration from defender Stefan Thomson saw a back pass headed short, and keeper Tim Wallace left with no choice but to rush out and watch the ball lofted over him and into the net.

The first half began with Oxford kicking off and straight out the blocks, threatening the home side immediately with a charge down the left flank and a subsequent shot launched just over the bar.

They spent the rest of the first half firmly on top, harrying the Cambridge defence with regularity and forcing their hosts into frequent panicky defensive decisions.

Oxford directed most of their attack-

ing play down the right flank in this period and had multiple goal-scoring opportunities as a result.

It was not long before the Dark Blues forced an opening, with one of many first half corners finding its way to a melee of players before ending up on the crossbar.

The subsequent rebound found an Oxford foot on the volley, to put the visitors ahead after 18 minutes.

Oxford's goalkeeper maintained good distribution throughout, and a loose Cambridge defence presented plenty of holes to direct action through.

In one of these moments, the Oxford attack skilfully lurched through the offside trap for a one-on-one with the keeper.

Wallace, however, showed quick reactions to get out and parry the resultant shot.

A free kick in the 32nd minute saw captain Nick Gallagher feed the ball to striker Kosi Nwuba, who was able to shake off the Oxford defence. Although the resultant shot packed a punch, it was ultimately too central and too easy for

the keeper to deal with.

From here, Cambridge grew into the game, and played out the rest of the first half with a defensive composure which had been distinctly lacking. They were able to make it to the break with a deficit of just one goal.

The second half marked a dramatic and immediate improvement by the hosts, who had clearly not allowed their heads to dip. Greater possession play allowed Cambridge to get men forward in a way not possible in the first half, and the chances came thick and fast as a result.

The Light Blues then subbed in Ethan Rados, who added a creative flare previously lacking.

Just a few minutes after coming on the winger, Rados made a silky run down the right flank before cutting inside to release a determined shot at the goal, only to see a resolute Oxford defence block and clear.

Rados was to get his dividend, however. A quality effort from Patrick Mortimer saw a lovely curling shot from 30 yards dip goal-bound, but it was blocked

by a full-stretch save from the Oxford keeper.

The resulting corner drew the move of the match: swung in from the left, it seemingly missed its intended target, only to be found on the edge of the area by Rados, who, in a moment of sheer brilliance, swung a left boot at it on the volley and sent it spiralling into the top right corner to level the score to 1-1 in the 77th minute.

Seeking to build on this, wave after wave of attack went towards an increasingly frustrated Oxford defence.

However, in what should have been a routine pass, Thomson attempted to head the ball back to an onrushing Wallace, only for it to fall way too short and into the path of a marauding Oxford forward, who calmly lifted the ball over the keeper and into an empty net, making it 2-1 at 84 minutes.

Late flurries came to nothing and the referee blew for the Dark Blues to take the encounter 2-1.

Cambridge next face Derby away on 27/11, whilst Oxford head to Reading on 20/11.

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The second half marked a dramatic and immediate improvement by the hosts
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Late flurries came to nothing
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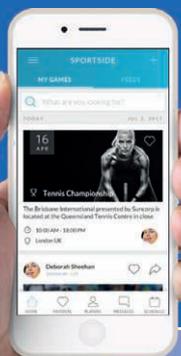


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Cambridge takes on Oxford in football: hosts succumb to visiting team following late goal **31**



Cambridge 67

Sussex 10

Cambridge women breeze past Sussex to come out victorious

Ben Phillips
Sports Reporter

The CURFC Women's team extended their run of good form to win their third game in a row, with a 67-10 win over Sussex University Women at Grange Road on Wednesday afternoon.

Coreen Grant and Jenni Shuttleworth particularly stood out, as they both proved to be a real handful for the Sussex defence.

This caused issues for the visiting team all afternoon, with both players scoring a couple of great tries, each coming off of good runs.

Missing a number of key forwards, the Light Blues made several changes to their squad.

This allowed plenty of players to experience some game time ahead of the Varsity Match next month. Suzi Pozniak, for instance, was given her debut on the wing, and put on a very good display of talent.

The Cambridge women came flying out to start the game. They were able to score a try within the first couple of minutes on their opening attack, with Laura Nunez-Mulder putting the ball over the line.

The opening 25 minutes saw a determined Cambridge dictate the gameplay, and they quickly emerged as the much more successful side, managing to gain four more tries in quick succession.

Most notably, just before half time, Bluebell Nicholls scored a great try after a smart Cambridge move down the flank and some quick offloading and handling from the Cambridge team.

Sussex were certainly pleased to see the interval arrive, offering a break to gather together and discuss strategy. Cambridge finished the opening half of the game on a strong 38-0.

The second period began with a re-energized Sussex frustrating Cambridge, refusing to simply give in to defeat.

The Sussex team managed to break

▲ **The teams put on an entertaining display** (BEN PHILLIPS)

through the Cambridge centres a couple of times, and with some great support play were able to find an opening through the Cambridge backs.

They were rewarded with a well-taken try, marking the first time they had scored in a fair while. This was met with some wild celebrations from the Sussex team.

This glimpse of success was, however, not to last for long, as Cambridge subsequently managed to get a hold back on the game. The Cambridge team's high levels of energy and fitness, combined with great experience, were increasingly evident as the game went on.

Jenni Shuttleworth managed to get a couple more well-taken tries in as she broke free and skipped past the Sussex players on the break.

The game finished much in the same way that it started, with a Cambridge attack turning into a try: the last move of the game saw Lottie Paterson break through the Sussex backs and score.

The final score was a 67-10 victory for the Cambridge women.

Cambridge Captain Fiona Shuttleworth said that she was "very proud of the girls and their performance".

"It was a good opportunity to try out the skills we're doing in training", she said, adding that, due to being in a higher league this year, "we are forced to earn our wins and that's good because each week we are excelling, we do come back from some games frustrated because we know the potential we have and when things don't go quite to plan it can be frustrating".

With only four weeks and two games to go now until the Varsity Match at Twickenham, this was a good opportunity for Cambridge to practise and prepare. Talking about the forthcoming fixture, Shuttleworth continued: "we would be fools to be complacent".

"Going into that match we need to do what we do and not focus on what they do".

“*Their high levels of energy and fitness were evident*”